Hanging Out With Oshima Pola Negri: Tempestuous Temptress

Roberta Findlay: The Lady Makes Porn / Jones On Tex Avery

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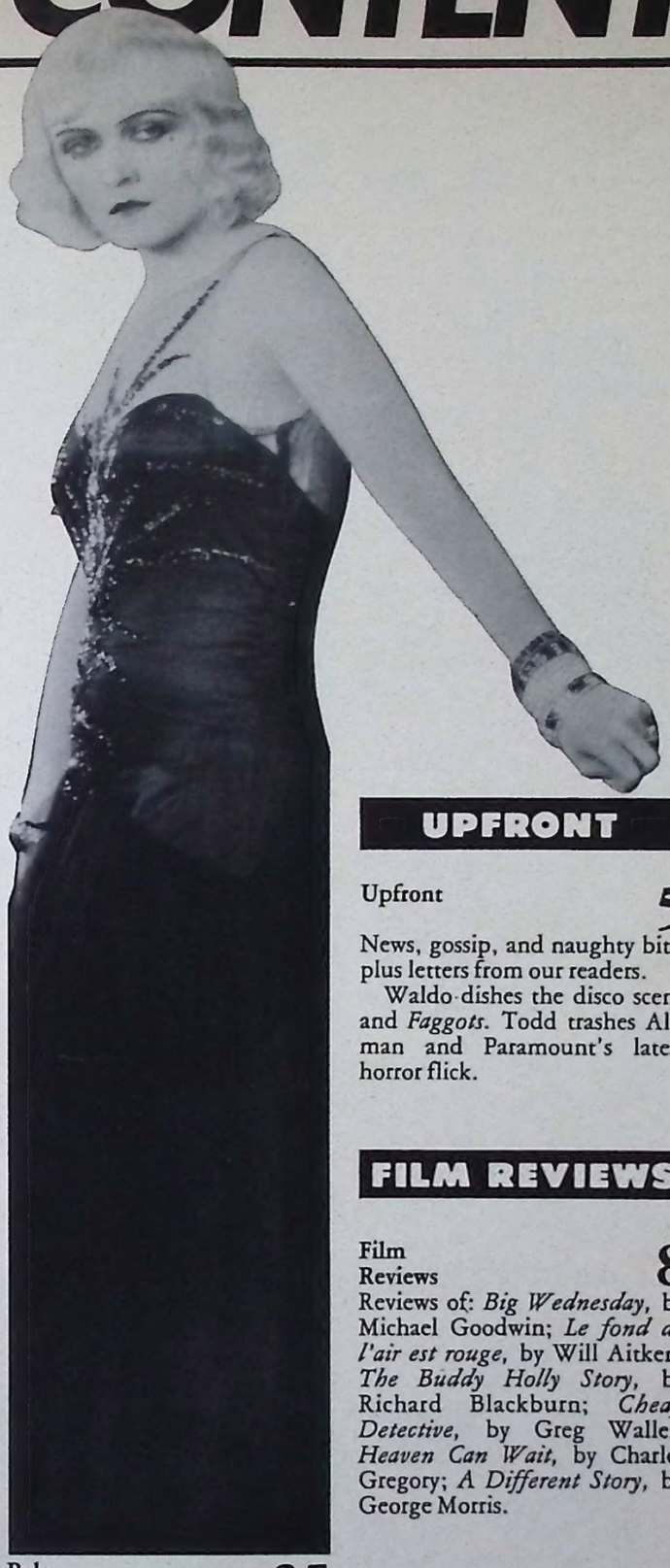

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Letters

Rather hypocritical

Much thanks for running your piece on the Kennedy assassination media "coverage" [May]. It's about time somebody exposed the coverup criminals at CBS for what they have done to our country. I have been unable to stomach "Sixty Minutes" ever since I learned of the real role played by that hypocrite, Dan Rather, in all of this.

S. Duncan Harp
Cambridge, Mass.

Devastating to whom?

In no position to see *Coming Home* at present, I can't challenge George Morris's assessment of it; as a good non-American, however, I must be permitted a scoff of skepticism re his view that "The Vietnam War was a devastating experience for the American psyche, shattering the very foundations on which this country flourished for two centuries."

Admittedly that war was a devastating experience for all the Vietnamese, bodies and souls. But were most Yankees really shaken or affected deeply by their nation's first military humiliation in well over a century of wielding the big stick?

It may be that director "Ashby and his writers do not even skim the surface of this issue," as Morris claims, but have any but a very few Americans dared to plumb the implications of it?

Robert MacLeod
Sirdar, British Columbia

Pity the victims

As much as I enjoyed reading George Morris' review of *Coming Home* [May], I cannot bring myself to agree with much of what he says. Admittedly, the '60s soundtrack is grossly overused and the pickup scene does seem a little unnecessary, but I don't believe Ashby is manipulating us as much as Mr. Morris thinks he is. The movie is not so much about who believes in war and who doesn't as it is about who's crippled by it and who's not.

Coming Home's strong point is that it does not view those who fought in Vietnam as establishment assholes, but as victims of themselves and of a society who taught them that fighting for their country was the right thing to do, no matter what. These are victims Ashby wants us to pity, not hate.

Mark Rossier
Latham, NJ

The rabid lotus

How about more on David Cronenberg, Canadian director of *Shivers* and *Rabid*? Ditto the director of *Seizure*, a very interesting Canadian horror film of a few seasons back (Jonathan Frid, Martine Beswick). And most of all, that man Sachs (William?) who made *Alice, Sweet Alice* (*Communion*), the most extraordinary horror film I've seen in recent years. Yes, I know, genre, etc. But art is art, no matter where you find it; out of the mud grows the lotus.

Dennis Etchison
Santa Monica, Calif.

Pure Kael

I applaud Mr. O'Neill's letter [May] replying to Mitch Tuchman's article [Nov. 1977].

The sentence Tuchman quoted, "'Cinema' in a pure sense is not to be found," was a replique to odd purists who wanted to achieve "purely cinematic films"—clearly an impossibility. And she cited *The Godfather* as "a great example of how some of the best popular movies come out of a merger of commerce and art," so all this about her trying frantically to separate the two is untrue.

Peter Wakefield
London, England

Acting Out

Your film reviews are quite informative and helpful. I found George Morris to be right on about *An Unmarried Woman* [May], although I found the scenes with the "real-life professional" psychiatrist disconcerting, like watching a conversation scene from *Easy Rider*. It changes the mood or the tone from drama to documentary. The woman isn't an actress, and I don't think I would consult her as a psychiatrist either.

Paul L. Miller
Guelph, Ontario

Know thy subject

As a film critic, I find the most arrogant vice of the professional voyeur to be lack of knowledge of the material he / she is writing about. Case in point: Jack Noble's March review of *A Little Night Music*.

In commenting on the "excellent performers," he refers to two members of the original stage cast as appearing in their original roles in the film. How

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HUGS, KISSES, LAWSUITS AND MURDER

Murray Markowitz's films have a way of attracting attention.

His first film, granted, didn't make much of a stir: *More Than One* was a quiet enough love story about mentally-retarded people. His second feature, *August and July* (about a love affair between two women) received a bit more notice, was selected for film festivals in Holland and Australia, but has played only sporadically.

Then, in 1976, Markowitz's *Recommendation for Mercy* was released. The film's plot bore a striking similarity to a celebrated 1959 case in which a teen-aged Steven Truscott was convicted for the rape-murder of a young girl. The fact that the film suggested strongly that the main character was innocent seemed to upset a lot of "the authorities" (Markowitz today describes that film as a story of "unrequited love"). Produced on a $350,000 budget, *Recommendation* went on to become Canada's 10th top-grossing English-language film (it is distributed in the US by Cinema Shares, NYC).

Three years earlier—in July 1973—beautiful Christine Demeter had been found bludgeoned to death in her suburban Toronto home. By the end of 1974, her wealthy Hungarian-born husband had been found guilty of having her killed in order to collect on a $1-million life insurance policy. He is now serving a life sentence. For 32-year-old Markowitz, who professes an admiration for the work of Hitchcock and Jean Genet, this was clearly the stuff that films are made of.

A million dollars later, Markowitz's fourth feature, entitled *I Miss You Hugs and Kisses,* is set to open in 25 Ontario theatres come September 8—that is, if the police will let it.

Peel County Police Chief Doug Burrows (who headed the Demeter investigation) saw Markowitz's film at a July preview and called the film "pure garbage" and "devoid of truth," and said "the police officers are portrayed as cold-blooded killers." Burrows has threatened an injunction to prevent distribution of the film, and a nervous Markowitz has already had his phone line swept once for taps.

Elke Sommer in I Miss you, Hugs and Kisses—*Murray Markowitz's controversial murder mystery flick.*

What may be upsetting the law officer is the fact that, in the film version, the Demeter character (played by Donald Pilon) is unequivocally innocent. (In fact, it's the *wife*—played by Elke Sommer for a $100,000 fee and a piece of the film's profits—who cheats on her husband and plots to have *him* killed.) And, maintains Markowitz, the police have all along taken an almost personal interest in the conviction of Demeter, even to the unusual extent of attending the Supreme Court appeal (where Demeter's conviction was upheld). One person who approves of Markowitz's version is Demeter himself, who has read the script and pronounced it "closer to the truth" than a book, *By Persons Unknown,* that claims to be a strictly factual account of the case.

Yet, Markowitz stoutly maintains that it was never his intention to produce a straight documentary of the Demeter case, and uses *The Greek Tycoon* as an example of the type of fact-*cum*-fiction mixture he's tried to achieve. He's far more interested in "the emotion, the people, the drama, the *cinema*" than in sticking strictly to the facts.

Whether the film is fact or fiction, and whether it opens on September 8 or not, Markowitz has once again managed to attract attention. *I Miss You Hugs and Kisses* has already been sold in Turkey, the Philippines, and Kenya, but Cinepix (the Montreal-based foreign sales agent) is holding off on the major markets, hoping that a strong showing in Canada will boost the price of foreign rights.

Meanwhile, Markowitz is already at work on his next film, *181 Days,* which he describes as "a love story." When pressed, however, he will admit that "there *was* a crime involved."

SHORTS

July 17 saw the start of THE MUPPETS' first feature film. The musical is cleverly titled *The Muppet Movie.* ... GLENDA JACKSON will star in *The Grass is Singing* (based on the Doris Lessing novel), with production planned for late summer of next year. ... BLAKE (*Pink Panther*) EDWARDS has revealed that he is working on a film version of *Paradise Lost,* "utilizing a tremendous amount of special effects. The scenes in Hell would be overwhelming." ... The cottage built by ROBERT FLAHERTY for the filming of *Man of Aran* (1934) is to be sold by the director's granddaughter. ... ROBERT ALTMAN has begun production of *A Romance* (the story of a love between a wealthy Greek man and a member of a female rock group). 20th Century-Fox releases Altman's *A Wedding* (his 13th film in 9 years) in September. ... GENE WILDER will be directed by DICK RICHARDS in the upcoming WB production, *No Knife.* ... WERNER HERZOG has finished shooting *Nosferatu,* and the citizens of Delft, in Holland, are breathing a sigh of relief. For extra horror, Herzog bought a few thousand rats from a laboratory, but most of them were caught once filming had been completed (the job of rounding them up was made slightly easier by the fact that the show-biz rats were white, after several attempts to paint them black failed). The picture stars KLAUS KINSKI, BRUNO GANZ and ISABELLE ADJANI. ... FRANCIS COPPOLA has asked that the 70mm prints which will be used for the intitial engagements of his *Apocalypse Now* not carry any credits at all. So that viewers will be able to tell the players, they'll receive a theatre-style printed program. *Apocalypse* is now not scheduled to be released before next spring—at least a year-and-a-half late. ... December will see the start of shooting, in Paris, of *Clair de Femme,* COSTA-GAVRAS directing from the original ROMAIN GARY novel. COSTA-GAVRAS is also being mentioned as director of the long-planned *The Human Condition.* ...LEE MARVIN, MARK HAMILL and ROBERT CARRADINE star in SAMUEL FULLER's *The Big Red One,* based on Fuller's own WW2 experiences in the 1st Infantry Division. ... ISABELLE ADJANI, MARIE-FRANCE PISIER and ISABELLE HUPPERT play *Les Soeurs Brontë* in the ANDRE TECHINE film currently being shot. ... BUD CORT—fresh from the title role

Blake Edwards—getting Hell on film.

in *Hitler's Son*—is now in a made-for-TV feature version of ALDOUS HUXLEY's *Brave New World*. ... LINA WERTMULLER is reportedly set to roll *La Napolitana, Il Socialista, Il Mafioso*, with SOPHIA LOREN, MARCELLO MASTROIANNI and GIANCARLO GIANINNI in the parts, respectively. ... JON DEMME is in New York, directing ROY SCHEIDER (among others) in *Last Embrace*. ... KEN RUSSELL has been signed to direct a movie version of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. ... HENRY FONDA plays a 73-year-old man who hitchhikes across California seeking a cure for his arthritis, and JANE FONDA the doctor who does or doesn't have a cure, in *The Journey of Simon McKeever*.... ... Immigration lawyers in Hollywood are reported to be working on INGMAR BERGMAN's application for US residency. ... Preproduction has begun (at England's Pinewood Studios) on the DINO DE LAURENTIIS production of *Flash Gordon*—NIC ROEG directs. ... JILL CLAYBURGH is in Rome to star in BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI's *The Moon*. ... Just as we were wondering whatever happened to NOEL (*Pretty Poison*—one of our favorite films) BLACK, we hear that he's been (1) signed to direct DONALD SUTHERLAND, BROOKE ADAMS and PAUL MAZURSKY in *A Man, a Woman and a Bank*, and (2)

Dish Night/Waldo Lydecker

DISCO WARS: Trendy Manhattanites battled their way through two big disco events in the past month; the dual openings of Xenon, the highly-touted successor to Studio 54, and the GREASE sock-hop at Studio itself. Xenon's initial opening night was such a fiasco, with both celebrities and celebrity-chasers caught outside in the rain on 43rd Street when they were refused admission, that Howard Stein tried to soothe the bad vibes and the worst press in years by throwing another, smaller party a week later. Bob Evans and Liv Ullman cheeked-to-cheeked at the first event, and Cheryl Tiegs danced California-style at the second, but both were generally pretty lacklustre in terms of star-gazing. The GREASE opening was a lot zippier; Travolta was a no-show, but Olivia Newton-John wore her tight pants from the movie, Barry Diller slow-danced with Stockard Channing, and bitter rivals Halston and Diane von Furstenberg wrapped their arms around each other for photographers. It was reported that at the Chicago opening of the film, psychotic fans crushed a couple of Miss N-J's ribs, but this was later proven to be a fabrication of the Stigwood publicity department, who had recently had such good luck with a story about the cracked ribs of another of its stars, Peter Frampton. People who watch such things were thrown into a state of suspense over whether or not he would be well enough to attend the SGT. PEPPER premiere later in the month. We'll let you know what happens next time.

DUSTY TRAIL: Winging through London, Dustin Hoffman (without Anne and with his proposed POPEYE musical with Lily Tomlin as O.O. on the shelf) blew kisses at American Elaine Page, who has just taken the town by storm as EVITA. He also caught up on his West End theatre-going, and liked one play, Ray Cooney's WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?, so much that he optioned it for Broadway and possibly the movies. It stars Dusty look-alike and actalike Tom Conti (who was in GLITTERING PRIZES) and is reportedly a knee-slapper about a man paralyzed from the neck down.

WHO'S TOGETHER / WHO'S APART: Diahanne Abbott and Bobby De Niro are apart. Brooke Haywire and George Butler, the man who pumped Arnold Schwarzenegger into a household word, are together. Susan Sarandon and Louis Malle are very much together; we caught them shopping for vegetables early one morning in Southampton, and also at a party for author Winston Groom at which Betty Bacall announced to everyone within earshot that her autobiography would be coming out in January and that everyone within earshot should read it or else. To continue; Liza Minnelli and Baryshnikov are apart, Liza Minnelli and Al Pacino are together, and Liza Minnelli and Gower Champion are apart. Finally, Rod Stewart and Alana Hamilton are together.

WHO?: There is a big buzz in Tinseltown over a very thinly-veiled character in Larry Kramer's upcoming novel for Random House, FAGGOTS, who closely resembles the New York-based head of a major studio. The character (in the book) lives with a sexually suspect female designer, and readers of this column (or of any other column in the Free World for that matter) shouldn't have a very hard time piecing that one together.

TEARJERK: Ann-Margret will follow in the tearstained footsteps of Claudette Colbert and Lana Turner when she essays the leading role in Allan Carr's projected remake of golden weepie IMITATION OF LIFE. Carr reportedly wants to make Cicely Tyson the next Hattie McDaniel and move the whole sad story to Watts in the troubled 1970s.

Pacino in his Keller phase: these days it's Liza.

Those famous tight pants. Boogie on, Olivia!

DOG DAYS AHEAD: Just when Orphan Annie's Sandy, having written his autobiography, seemed to have settled down and retired from the columns, jaded New Yorkers were given a shot in the arm with the arrival in town of the one and only Lassie. That beloved canine star checked into the Plaza Hotel to brush herself into shape for her personal appearance act at Radio City Music Hall, accompanying her comeback film THE MAGIC OF LASSIE in which she will sing a couple of numbers. There have been no indications that she and Sandy have even met, but we're certain some demented PR person will have them dancing till the AM at Studio before long.

YOU WIN SOME...: For those of you who have been sitting up all night hoping that it would happen, you'll be glad to hear that in ROCKY TWO, he's gonna win. For those of you who have been sitting up all night hoping that it wouldn't happen, Neil Diamond has been set to star in a rock remake of Al Jolson's THE JAZZ SINGER.

Bergman—ankling to Hollywood?

Jane Fonda—soon she'll be playing Daddy's doctor.

Marilyn Hassett—to star in Bell Jar.

signed to direct ELKE SOMMER in *Two Minks in a Cage.* ... UA will be releasing WOODY ALLEN's ultra-serious *Interiors* on a limited basis in September. Look for *The Bell Jar,* directed by LARRY PEERCE, and starring MARILYN HASSETT JULIE HARRIS and ANNE JACKSON; and BETTE MIDLER in MARK RYDELL's *The Rose*—on one scene (a live performance by the Midler character) head cinematographer VILMOS ZSIGMOND (who won an Oscar for *Close Encounters*) had help from HASKELL WEXLER (Oscar for *Bound for Glory*), CONRAD HALL (Oscar for *Butch Cassidy*) and OWEN ROIZMAN (nominated for *Network*) among others! ... A couple of up-coming productions worth watching for: ARTHUR PENN directing *Altered States*; WIM WENDERS directing *Hammett* (i.e. Dashiell Hammett) for COPPOLA's American Zoetrope. ... And, finally, we note—with great sorrow—the passing of MARK ROBSON, in London recently, at the age of 64. Born in Montreal, his directorial credits included *The Bridges at Toko-Ri, The Harder They Fall, Peyton Place, The Inn of the Sixth Happiness, The Prize, Von Ryan's Express, Valley of the Dolls,* and *Earthquake.* At the time of his death, he was working on *Avalanche Express.*

Coasting/Todd Hackett

RE-TAKES IN THE BLACK LAGOON: John Frankenheimer, who was supposed to be directing Brinks, a caper film, for Dino di Laurentiis, suddenly found himself replaced by William Friedkin. Frankenheimer was rushed over to a new Paramount project so hush-hush its cast was allowed only glimpses of the screenplay.

First titled "The Windsor Project" and now going the cloaked-in-secrecy publicity rounds as *The Prophecy,* the film is keeping Paramount publicists hopping for new promotional tricks.

Although shooting has already begun in British Columbia, the studio has not yet announced that Talia Shire and Robert Foxworth head the cast. And David Seltzer (he did the screenplay from an idea by Paramount President Michael Eisner), whose book version of his script for *The Omen* brought him big bucks, managed a similar deal with Ballantine for *The Prophecy,* but fell back on the tired old trick of making the publishers sign a legal document swearing not to reveal the contents. To prolong the suspense no further—no one asked us to sign anything, dammit—*The Prophecy* is about industrial pollution that has poisoned the water and air on the New England coast to the extent that fish and other local fauna begin to show disturbing mutations (courtesy of the Paramount Special Effects Dept.). A local scientist, concerned for the health of his pregnant wife and unborn child, joins forces with American Indians residing nearby, and together they attempt to fight the good fight for ecology. Meanwhile, whites and Indians alike are getting themselves done in in most mysterious circumstances. The killer turns out to be—how'd you guess?—a hideously mutated creature with brains oozing from his head.

Don't tell anyone we told you.

CONCORDE CONFABS: The supersonic Big Bird has certainly done wonders for Franco-American celluloid enterprises. What hath *Cousin, Cousine* wrought? Isabelle Adjani of course is discreetly coughing her way through a *Camille* for Paramount, which is also—for unfathomable reasons—developing an American remake of *Pardon Mon Affaire.* And George Roy Hill has just left Paris where he'll direct the movie version of the French bestseller *E=MC^2 Mon Amour,* which is about a pubescent affair between an American boy and a French girl. When the boy's father is transferred back Stateside, the two of them run off to Venice in an effort to stay together. Aimez-vous Bombs?

Keeping Hill company is Michael Ritchie, in France for *Cannes Game,* a look at a certain film festival. Rounding out the gaggle of temporary expatriates are husband and wife writing team Gloria Katz and Willard Huyck, who are directing their first movie, *French Postcards,* about Americans in Paris in the 60s and featuring Marie-France Pisier.

Meanwhile, add to the list of French directors in Hollywood Diane Kurys, a young actress who wrote a screenplay about two girls in high school and directed it using non-professional actors and solidly launched a new career when *Diabolo Menthe* (Peppermint Soda) became the biggest French box-office success of the year. She is out here now to sign with Columbia to develop an English-language film.

HOTCAKES: While some of us have marvelled recently at the fecundity of Fassbinder as he churns out films by the dozen, at least one American has hit a comparable stride and seems unable to keep his camera from turning. Robert Altman is currently at work on *A Romance* and when he completes the filming he will have shot three features in the past year, all in the can and unreleased. *A Wedding* opens the New York Film Festival in the fall. Shot last summer outside of Chicago, it takes a comic panoramic look at an affluent wedding and

French film personalities board Concorde for Hollywood.

features—among others—Carol Burnett and Lillian Gish.

After quitting Chicago, Altman moved up to Montreal to film *Quintet,* starring Paul Newman and Bibi Andersson. It's set in a future world where there are too many people around leading miserable lives, and so a game has been introduced whereby people are clustered into groups of five and left with the task of killing one another off.

A Romance gets us back to a cheerier note and features two actors who appear in *A Wedding.* Paul Dooley is an older conservative man who enters into a love affair with Marta Heflin (Van's neice) who is a singer with a struggling rock band. They meet through a mix-up in a computer dating service.

Altman's *next* project will most likely be about the health food industry, but he is also busy developing another script about tennis.

FILM REVIEWS

Big Wednesday/Milius, dir.

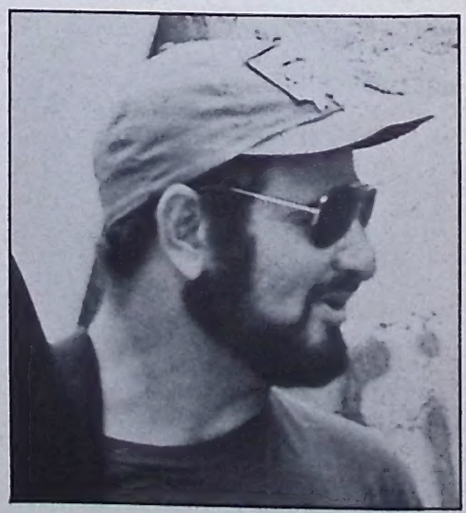
"Big Wednesday *is much more than a tarted-up surf movie; its prime concerns are time, loss and the nature of legend.*"

Ever since George Hamilton rode his motorcycle up the stairs and down the hallway of Sue Lyon's dormitory in *Evel Kneivel* (script by John Milius), I've been watching Milius with great interest. Neither *Dirty Harry, Dillinger, Magnum Force, The Wind and the Lion* nor *Apocalypse Now* (rough-cut, script much changed since Milius wrote the original version, but still including a surfing-on-the-beach-under-Vietcong-fire sequence that speaks to Milius' madness better than anything *I* could come up with) have dulled that interest. I don't miss any Milius films.

San Francisco is not surfing country—too cold, waves not so good, ambience too intellectual. But even northern Californians know a good archetype when they see one, and the opening night audience for *Big Wednesday*, which was paying, non-invited, no critics thanks, went *crazy*. They laughed at the drunken brawls, they gasped at the surfing stunts, they cheered the triumphs and groaned the defeats, and when Jan-Michael Vincent dumped his surfboard under the great godfather of all killer waves, a woman *screamed*—really screamed, like her boyfriend was going under. It made me glad I live in California.

I don't read many newspapers or magazines, especially film reviews, so it came as a surprise when a friend told me, several days later, that the critics hated *Big Wednesday*. Did they? I thought it was vital, flawed, idiosyncratic, thrilling, neurotic, fascinating. It's too easy to drag in name directors, but give me three anyway—Nick Ray for neurosis-into-cinema, obsession-into-art; John Ford for joy of fighting, audacity and American mythology; Don Siegal for violence, guns and filmic grace under pressure. Make that four—I need Paul Schrader for pessimism and psychological precision. They define the ballpark.

Big Wednesday. Twenty years in the lives of three great, early surfers. That's it—a simple idea, elegant and powerful. The



California Dreamin'. Director John Milius (lower right) limns a nostalgic picture of life in the curl, starring Gary Busey, William Katt and Jan-Michael Vincent.

surfing footage is astounding; I've *never* seen stuff like this before. How they got the cameras onto the boards and into the surf would make a film in itself; new cameras since *The Endless Summer,* better waterproof housings, slicker anti-vibration gadgets. Only one shot (the ride through the curl / tunnel at the end) looked fake to me —and since I've never ridden in a closing curl it's hard to say for sure. Everything else is clearly real.

Big Wednesday is much more than a tarted-up surf movie; its prime concerns are time, loss and the nature of legend. Much closer to *The Wings of Eagles* than *The Endless Summer,* its three aging surfers only seem to be the main characters; *Big Wednesday* is really about the mysterious Bear, maker of surfboards, maker of legends, transmitter of the mysteries. Bear's roots run through Tom Doniphon in *Liberty Valance* to Vulcan, god of fire and forge, maker of thunderbolts. Bear is the most interesting character in *Big Wednesday,* and also the most maddening—because although Milius clearly cares more about Bear than about anyone else, he lets his metamorphosis from demigod to drunk take place off-screen. I want to *see* Bear's fall; I want to understand it.

There are other problems. A graveyard scene that John Ford could have pulled off, but Milius cannot. An excursion to Tijuana that seems to be included mainly so Milius can do a walk-on as a dope pusher. A draft board comedy sequence that goes on too long. A climax that does not (cannot) quite come up to the glorious build Milius gives it.

None of that matters. Milius burns with cinematic energy—sometimes raw and uncontrolled, sometimes honed to an edge of cutting ideology (as in *Wind*). This makes him of utter importance in a Hollywood of TV directors-turned-film-makers-without-passion: this puts him in the ballpark. *Big Wednesday* loses focus from time to time, but the energy is here. When *F.I.S.T.* is a forgotten joke, when *Pretty Baby* is a minor footnote to a minor director's career, when *The Last Waltz* plays midnight movies as a nostalgia fix, 1978 will be the year John Milius made *Big Wednesday.*

Michael Goodwin

A Warner Bros. release of an A-Team production. Director: John Milius. Producer: Buzz Feitshans. Screenplay: Milius, Dennis Aaberg. Camera: Bruce Surtees. Editors: Robert L. Wolfe, Tim O'Meara. Music: Basil Poledouris. Sound: Harlan Riggs. Art Director: Dean Mitzner. Cast: Jan-Michael Vincent, William Katt, Gary Busey, Patti D'Arbanville, Lee Purcell, Sam Melville, Robert Englund.

Le fond de l'air est rouge/Marker, dir.

"His point is not just that Revolution is Hell, but that it is a nearly hopeless struggle."

Somewhere in the midst of the four hours and some minutes that make up the remarkable new documentary from France, *Le fond de l'air est rouge,* we see a young black man lying motionless on the pavement. At first glance there seems to be a beautiful red flower blooming on his cheek. But then the camera moves in closer—although I'm not so sure it actually moves at all: it may simply take our eyes this long to comprehend what they see—and we begin to realize that "gaping wound" is so much more than a cliché.

Le fond de l'air est rouge is remarkable for what it shows, for how it shows what it shows and finally for what it says.

What it shows, with startling range, detail and clarity, is the last fifteen years of revolutionary struggle across the world (although emphasis is mainly on events in the West). Subtitled "Scenes de la troisième guerre mondiale—1966-1977," the film divides into two fairly equal parts, the successes and hopes of the sixties—"Les mains fragiles"—and the defeats and pessimism of the seventies—"Les mains coupées."

There is very little in all this that could be called director Chris Marker's own footage. He dedicates *Le fond de l'air* to "the real auteurs of this film... the innumerable cameramen, soundmen, witnesses and militants whose work ceaselessly opposes that of the Powers That Be, the Powers that would have us forget."

How the film shows what it shows though is distinctly Marker's province. Once a print journalist of some renown (his real name is Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve), he turned to film in the early fifties, his first work of any note a documentary on the Finnish Olympic Games of 1952.

His early films—*Dimanche à Pékin* (1955), *Lettre de Siberie* (1957), *Le joli Mai* (1963)—feature a visual lyricism that is increasingly contradicted by a nearly unending stream of ironic commentary provided by the director himself. A critic of *Lettre de Siberie* noted that a blind man would have as much fun sitting through a Marker film as a sighted one.

By the sixties, Marker audiences found themselves confronted with films in which every element—image, sound, montage, subject, voice-over—seemed to be in constant opposition with every other. The carnage, both emotional and intellectual, left by the convergence of warring elements led one Anglophone writer to refer to Marker as a Metaphysical documentarist because he, like the poets of the same name, yokes together the most heterogeneous ideas with violence. (It was in the early sixties as well that Marker and Jean Rouch came to be recognized as the pioneers of the cinéma vérité movement in France).

It's hard to say if the battering violence of *Le fond de l'air* is more in the images themselves or in Marker's editing; this film seems fairly slashed together. The overture combines a loud and beautifully sure adaptation of a Boccherini composition with scene after scene of unarmed protesters, in every possible situation, of every age and race, being beaten again and again, by police clubs, by marauding plainclothesmen, by soldiers with plexiglas shields astride charging horses.

This kind of crescendoing montage—linked by violence—occurs at intervals throughout the film: students throwing stones at police in Soweto, in New York, in Bonn, in Bolivia; crowds running from tanks, from phalanxes of soldiers. The repetition of violence and the futile gestures against it would become deadening were Marker not so keen in forwarding one of the central points of his film: that in the twentieth century, revolution can in no way be seen through the Romantic eyes of the nineteenth. His point is not just that Revolution is Hell but that it is a nearly hopeless struggle. The other side has the technology, the money, the training, the experience and all the skilled brutality these combined can muster. They have the air and only at the very edges can we see a tinge of red. *Le fond de l'air* gives little reason to hope for success while offering every conceivable reason for continuing the struggle.

And yet all this is accomplished with us sensing little of the doctrinaire in Marker himself. His commitment to changing a world where the vast majority are allowed to possess one-sixth of its wealth is unquestionable, but he avoids by a long shot being hagiographer of the Left. The footage assembled here is too strong and immediate to allow much idealization. Allende talking to a hall filled with supporters succeeds not as the martyr he has become but as a man shrewdly aware of his country's chances at true revolution. "We have," he tells them, "all the disadvantages of a capitalist state—inflation, unemployment, etc.—and none of the advantages of a socialist one."

Castro too, the central subject of Marker's laudatory *Cuba, Si!* (1961), provides a fascinating study as he moves from valiant leader of the revolution in 1959 to official if somewhat reluctant apologist for the Soviet "normalization" of Prague in 1968.

For much of the film, though, we aren't so much thinking or revising or synthesizing as we are remembering all we've managed to forget in fifteen years. Much of it, I

suspect, we never really knew to begin with. What sort of markers do we have in our immediate past, what dates separate our histories, give us perspectives, tell us what came before, after, together?

For the French Left the watershed year is certainly 1968 (extensively and perceptively covered by Marker to the point that non-French viewers might be tempted to go for popcorn). For North Americans the view isn't that clear nor the audience homogeneous enough to say what the hell has happened to the Left here—let alone throughout the rest of the West—over the past decade.

Marker—Godard referred to him once as Magic Marker—by moving events into opposition, by providing a consistent, albeit continually revised, viewpoint that is always instructive but too ironic to ever be didactic, gives us back our pasts, provides us with the collective memory he says those in power would deny us. Taking the contradictory headlines, the columns of newsprint, the blotchy wirephotos, the glossy TV newsclips, the amateur footage, he somehow fits them all together until they make, not just good sense, but historical and political sense too.

Beyond imposing a coherent viewpoint, Marker brings a pragmatism of a kind one doesn't expect to find in a film this wide-ranging: he's not so much interested in designating which revolutionary line is the correct one to toe as he is in examining whether the struggles of the Left have given the results originally hoped for.

He finds essentially two strategies preoccupying the forces of anti-imperialism over the past two decades—first the attempt to export guerilla warfare throughout the Third World in the sixties (he sees the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia as the end of that early hope to create, in Guevara's words, "two, three, 51 Vietnams") and the later equally ill-fated essays at democratic revolution, the instructive model this time being Chile.

What appears to be missing here is a third strategy, that of urban terrorism. Marker gives very little space to the Palestinian struggle, the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigade. There's a quick mention of the Baader-Meinhoff group, but for the most part we're left to draw our own conclusions. Does Marker believe these are not part of the movement toward world revolution, does he feel their tactics are counter-productive and therefore counter-revolutionary, or what? In a film that devotes perhaps a quarter of its footage to Paris in 1968—admittedly his dissection of the brief unity exhibited by students, workers and French Socialists in general is particularly revealing—it seems that urban guerillas deserve more than passing mention, if only for the widespread reaction they have elicited from the Western powers. Surely these movements have some role to play in these "Scenes from the Third World War."

On another, different front, *Le fond de l'air* shows itself to be quite evidently—and disturbingly—a man's film, telling us in so many ways that this is a man's revolution. Except for a token five or ten minutes near the end of the film (the ubiquitous Gloria Steinem gets her cameo), women are but fleetingly seen and almost never heard. And when they are seen, it's usually because they've been picked out of the crowd by the cameraman because they're attractive, in much the same way we get to see pretty women in the stands on TV coverage of sports events. Marker most probably gives us an accurate picture of the way power is held and maintained by men all around the world, be they Socialist, Capitalist or anything between or beyond. On the other hand we sense he's not quite aware that this domination too provides an important reason for revolutionary action.

Two images from *Le fond de l'air est rouge* stay with us long after the lights go up. The first is stock footage of a bullfight, the enormous bull seemingly mortally wounded by the thrusts of the picador. This sequence comes early in the first half of the film, the half entitled "Les mains fragiles." The war in Vietnam is going against the Americans, Che is succeeding in Bolivia, students and workers throughout the world are organizing and uniting, there's that tentative air of jubilation as the bull lumbers blindly about the ring, his sleek black sides heaving and shuddering with the effort of breathing.

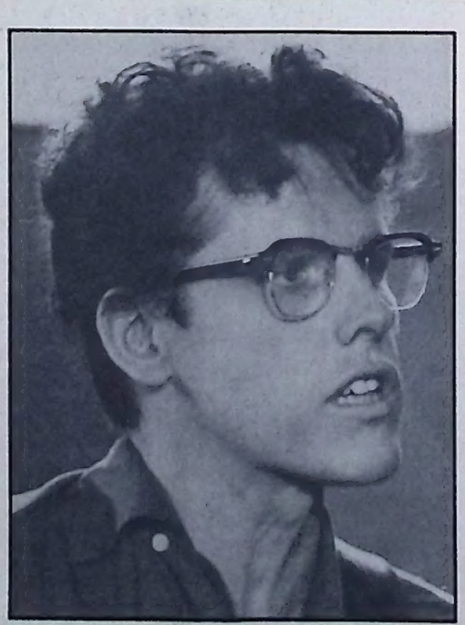
The final sequence of Part Two—"Les mains coupées"—shows how completely the situation has reversed in ten years. After Paris, after Prague, after Vietnam, after Chile. We are airborne, coursing swiftly over a field of long brown grass that stretches before us endlessly. Darting out diagonally through the vast field run brown wolves. They race outward from the camera, flashes of animal speed, reminding us of the careening rabbits in Renoir's *La Règle de Jeu*. Men in the helicopter we're viewing all this from shoot the wolves down quickly, one by one. It's no fight, no hunt, simply extermination carried out in the most efficient way possible with the best available technology, animal after animal somersaulting dead into the long brown grass, one last reminder of the odds against the struggle, one more reminder of why it should continue.

Will Aitken

INA-ISKA-Dovidis release and production. Written, conceived, directed and edited by Chris Marker, with the help of Valerie Mayroux, Luce Marsant, Pierre Camus, Annie-Claire Mittelberger, Christine Aya, Patrick Sauvion, Jean-Roger Sahunet. Music: Liciano Berio.

The Buddy Holly Story/Rash, dir.

"Busey's amazing performance, praised for its accuracy by both Holly's mother and ex-wife, is masterful."



Gary Busey as Holly—engaging.

Buddy Holly died at the age of 22 in February, 1959 when a four seater plane crashed in a nighttime Iowa blizzard. He has since been accorded the status of a pop music genius whose idiosyncratic style not only influenced many one-dimensional American imitators—Tommy Roe, Bobby Vee— but became one of the main ingredients for the sound of The British Invasion in the 60s. The Beatles' debt to Holly—as well as the Everly Brothers—is considerable, and The Stones enjoyed their first US hit with a recording of Holly's "Not Fade Away." If the early rock 'n' rollers can be divided into Mild Youth and Wild Youth—with the former a commercial, big-money reaction to the unpredictableness of the latter—then Holly was probably the wildest of the Milds. In fact his bespectacled boy inventor next door look on albums—complemented by a light, skipping tensile voice on disc—suggested a cerebral involvement with his music every bit as intense as Presley's hoodlum gothic expressionism.

Holly sang his songs, happy or sad, with the delight of a master artisan displaying all the ingenious musical treats and surprises—Tex-Mex guitar riffs, black gospel call and response—built into one tightly wound song-toy. Unlike many singers of the period, whose freak hits seem to be fortuitous but haphazard intersections of lyrical / musical hooks with public fancy—Holly went from C&W to rockabilly to rock 'n' roll, learning and absorbing in an amazingly short time before hatching out a string of original and highly disciplined hits. Holly was no hangloose, high livin' natural, but a methodical, hard worker who, at the time of his death, was already a sophisticated musician and producer. In the annals of American Myth Holly was more Thomas Edison than Davy Crockett, and those expecting wild and woolly fun will be disappointed with *The Buddy Holly Story*.

In fact the most dramatic thing to happen to Holly was his tragic death, and *that* we are deprived of, why, (too morbid? too familiar? too sensational? too depressing?) I don't know. What we are shown in the film's first half is the struggle of a young guy from Lubbock, Texas to succeed in music. The second half features his courtship, marriage and domestic life with his young Puerto Rican bride Maria Elena. Like many rise to fame stories, the first part has a natural propulsion that falters in the second. And on the whole the plot progression is very predictable. So are the characters. It isn't that conventional-minded childhood sweethearts, self-righteous ministers and racist record producers aren't out there in the real world. It's just that they aren't presented with enough insight / originality to interest us. The actor playing the record producer is given less than a minute to establish himself as the film's most odious baddie ("We don't want no nigger music, etc") so that Buddy Holly can punch him out to cries of huzzah! and well done! This is the Beverly Hills Liberal scene and it rings as phony as always. This and Holly playing guitar to the Children He Never Had are the two weakest scenes. Happily there are some wonderful unforced ones too.

In one of the best, Buddy and his two band members are in the car driving to Nashville for a first recording date. They're young and hopeful on a beautiful day, and they start fooling around with a tune that will eventually become the classic "Peggy Sue." In another they're opening at the Apollo—the first white act ever to play the place. The curtain parts on a sea of black faces which immediately begin to whisper at the sight of three young white ones. Then, awkwardly, Gary Busey as Buddy Holly leans into the microphone and with a seemingly spontaneous throwaway delivery says "Well... we didn't expect y'all either." This scene could—with more white and black interplay—have been the core of a very interesting movie, and was the basis of another film on Holly (closed down for legal reasons) in which Busey played Jerry Allison, drummer of Holly's band The Crickets. →

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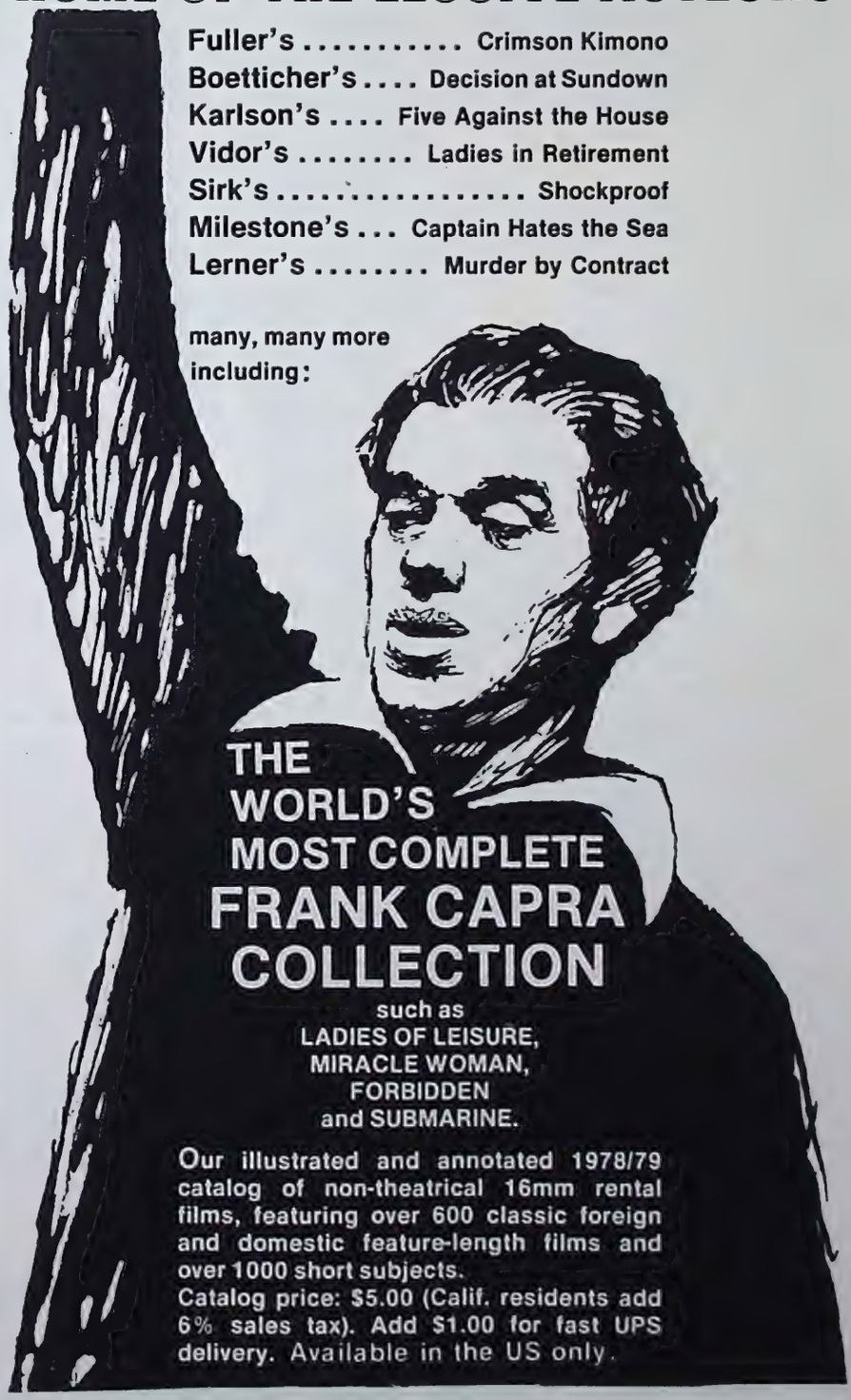

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Don Stroud, Holly's backup.

Charles Martin Smith and Don Stroud don't come off as well as Busey's band members. The few scenes at film's end that introduce their jealousy of Holly's fame and reluctance to accommodate his single-minded desire to record are never paid off or even developed. Consequently the two function only as stooges for Busey. Fortunately he is such a magnetic performer that their unfocused characters aren't so noticeable.

Busey's amazing performance, praised for its accuracy by both Holly's mother and ex-wife, is masterful. His blend of shy, smalltown Baptist and stubborn but shrewd musical visionary seems just right, and provides a wonderful contrast to his singing. Busey, an Oklahoma drummer who has played for Leon Russell and Willie Nelson, does all the singing himself, like some possessed hayseed with an overbite. Face contorted in a rictus of demonic effort, eyes madly glittering behind squarejohn two-tone glasses, Busey's very surrender to his music makes us its willing victims as well. This is all the more astounding since his portrayal (besides conversations with friends of Holly) is based entirely on the only two existing film clips of the singer / composer.

The sheer force of Busey's immersion into the character holds strung together scenes in place and gets us through a potentially mawkish romance. And from the movie's beginning, when he kicks off the pulse-quickening "Rock Around With Ollie Vee" at a roller rink, to the end when he soulfully sings "True Love Ways" in front of a big orchestra, he's got us on his side. Script and direction are fitfully engaging. Busey always is.

Richard Blackburn

A Columbia Pictures release of an Innovisions-ECA Production. Director: Steve Rash. Producer: Fred Bauer. Screenplay: Robert Gittler. Story by Steve Rash and Fred Bauer. Director of Photography: Stevan Larner. Editor: David Blewitt. Sound: Willie Burton. Cast: Gary Busey, Don Stroud, Charles Martin Smith, Bill Jordan, Maria Richwine, Conrad Janis, Albert Popwell, Amy Johnston.

Cheap Company: Stockard Channing, Eileen Brennan, Ann-Margret, Marsha Mason, Madeline Kahn, Louise Fletcher and of course Peter Falk.

The Cheap Detective/Moore, dir.

"As with Mel Brooks' parodies, gags in The Cheap Detective *are not merely milked but drained."*

Neil Simon's *The Cheap Detective* is a polished and "affectionate" send up of the casual film buff's Bogie—a lot of *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca,* a little *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep,* but no trace of anything as disturbing as *High Sierra* or disturbing / esoteric as *In a Lonely Place.* Obviously, Simon can spot a good, safe premise for a lucrative tongue-in-cheek picture, a "fun" movie that takes us back to the days of glamorous Hollywood overstatement. By exaggerating and combining the adventures of Sam Spade and Rick, Simon manages to juxtapose the absurdity of *The Maltese Falcon* with the romanticism of *Casablanca* (and vice versa) without doing anything that might tamper with our nostalgia or subvert our facile appreciation of either film.

With this fairly unadventurous focus, *The Cheap Detective* is still something of a refinement over *Murder by Death,* Simon's earlier elbow-in-the-ribs mélange of whodunnit caricature and tiresome plot gimmickry. Simon's targets have become more effective for being more specific; although *The Cheap Detective* doesn't chance sophisticated inside jokes but plays off the "big" scenes so often cited in coffee-table movie books. And director Robert Moore rarely does more than approximate the mise en scène and camera set-ups of *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon.* His major tasks are to provide equal time for the fifteen guest stars and breathing room for Simon's "laugh-a-minute" comedy, and to let his camera linger over meticulously detailed, period-piece sets and costumes. The decor oozes nostalgia / camp significance but has nothing to do with the 1940s Warner Brothers sound stage.

Most of the characters in *The Cheap Detective,* are easily recognizable parodies of their prototypes. For instance, John Houseman (as Jasper Blubber) physically resembles Sydney Greenstreet, and he does a fair job of mimicking Casper Gutman's mannered savoir-faire. Yet except for Louise Fletcher's Marlene DuCharme, a comic version of Ingrid Bergmanesque female nobility, almost all of the Simon-created roles become overextended cameos, not nearly so amusing the second time around.

Unfortunately, most of the joke characters in *The Cheap Detective* are called back later for at least one encore. (This repetition is almost Simon's structural principle—identical bits about rigor mortis

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"A dazzling moral tale...marvelous...startlingly beautiful." -Penelope Gilliatt, The New Yorker.

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An examination of social problems still being resolved despite the profound transformation of the Cuban revolution. The film dramatically confronts sexist attitudes that are a part of the "hangover" from pre-revolutionary days.

"An extraordinary film." -Rob Baker, Soho News.

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Silver Bear, Berlin Film Festival

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open and close the film.) As with Mel Brooks' parodies, gags in *Murder by Death* and *The Cheap Detective* are not merely milked but drained. Whereas Brooks bats around comic ideas until they lose resilience —plopping into the net with that same old wee-wee / doo-doo backspin—Simon seems obsessed with trying to "top" gags à la the James Agee pantheon of movie comedians. Ideally, as in a Buster Keaton feature, the comedy develops slowly through theme, character, and narrative, almost predictable variation and culminating surprise. But *The Cheap Detective* seldom gets beyond the primal stage; for Simon, a joke about a Chinaman named Won Fat Chink is "topped" twenty minutes later by a joke about whether an Oriental waiter is named Gin Sling or Brandy. Even the best gags and most inventive caricatures wear out when the expected "top" fizzles. Madeline Kahn as the Cheap Detective's Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Dom DeLuise as Pepe Damascus (read Joel Cairo) brilliantly carry off their first schtick-filled scenes, but soon become casualties in Simon's search for the comic coup.

Like *Murder by Death* and *High Anxiety*, *The Cheap Detective* proves that ninety minutes of short-range, immediately identifiable spoofing can't substitute for even one sequence of first-rate comedy.

Greg Waller

A Columbia / EMI & Rastar release. Director: Robert Moore. Producer: Ray Stark. Screenplay: Neil Simon. Director of Photography: John Alonzo. Editor: Sidney Levin. Music: Dave Grusin. Cast: Peter Falk, Ann-Margret, Eileen Brennan, Sid Caesar, Stockard Channing, James Coco, Dom DeLuise, Louise Fletcher, John Houseman, Madeline Kahn, Fernando Lamas, Marsha Mason, Phil Silvers, Abe Vigoda.

George Morris is the author of *Errol Flynn, Doris Day,* and *John Garfield,* three of the volumes in the *Illustrated History of the Movies* series. His book on Hollywood melodrama of the 50s will be published late this year.

Richard Blackburn wrote, directed, and acted in *Lemora.* He freelances for *Crawdaddy, Oui* and *The Village Voice,* among others, and is co-scenarist on *Frankencar.*

Charles Gregory teaches film at California State University in Sacramento.

Greg Waller is a freelance writer based in Lexington, Kentucky.

Michael Goodwin is a San Francisco-based freelance writer, and a *Take One* Associate Editor.

Will Aitken is a Montreal writer, teacher and poet, and is *Take One*'s Assistant Editor.

Heaven Can Wait/Beatty, dir.

"Heaven Can Wait demonstrates clearly that superb romantic comedies can still be made in the United States."

A recent Gallup Poll discovered that one in ten Americans believes in witches, one in nine believes in ghosts, one in eight believes in the Sasquatch and the Loch Ness Monster. More than twenty five per cent believe in astrology, forty per cent in devils, over half in ESP, almost sixty per cent in flying saucers, and fifty per cent believe in angels. Thus Warren Beatty may well have his finger on the fantasy pulse of America in his new film *Heaven Can Wait,* which asks its audiences to accept angels in the contrasting forms of James Mason and Buck Henry, heaven-bound airplanes, a form of reincarnation, and a Super Bowl won by a dead man with the help of a middle-level angel bureaucrat.

Heaven Can Wait is based on the popular 1941 fantasy comedy *Here Comes Mr. Jordan,* writen by Seton Miller and Sidney Buchman and based on a story by Harry Segall in the light-hearted fantasy style of Thorne Smith. A prize fighter (Robert Montgomery), a contender for the crown, is killed in a plane crash. He awakes to find himself strolling through the heavenly clouds with a fussy, bossy servant (Edward Everett Horton) toward an airplane where people are embarking for an unknown destination under the supervision of Mr. Jordan (Claude Rains). The prize fighter insists that he is not dead, and when the "records" are checked by these angelic bureaucrats, they find that Horton has indeed made a mistake and Montgomery is not due for another fifty years. Mr. Jordan promises to find Montgomery a new body, since the old one has been cremated by his loyal manager (James Gleason). The body Montgomery finally chooses has the advantage of being a millionaire, but the disadvantage of being married to Rita Johnson, who with her husband's secretary (John Amory) is plotting to murder Montgomery's new host. The situation is further complicated by the arrival of Evelyn Keyes, who is trying to rescue her father from the evil manipulations of the millionaire. Naturally Montgomery falls in love and decides to pursue both Keyes and

Warren Beatty and Julie Christie fall in love in Heaven Can Wait.

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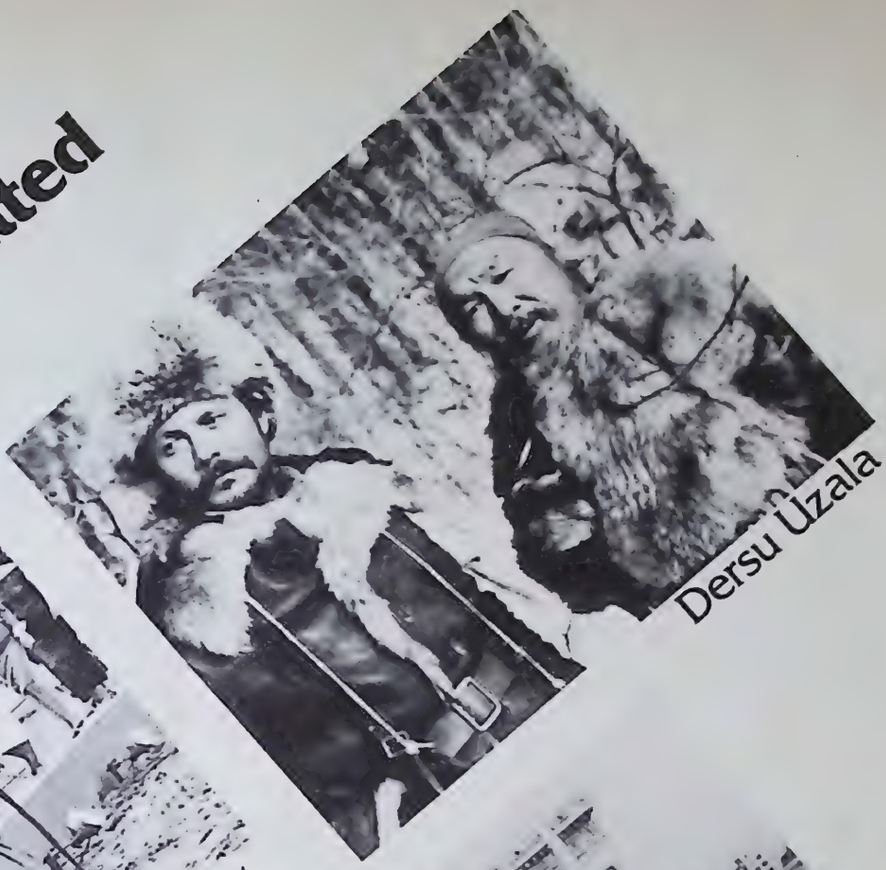

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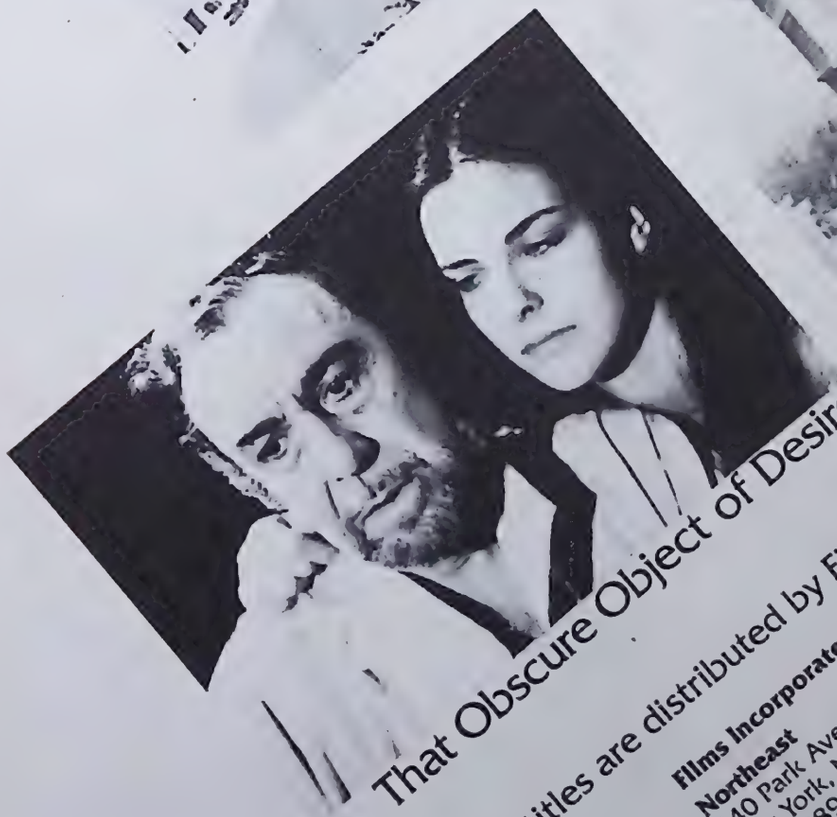

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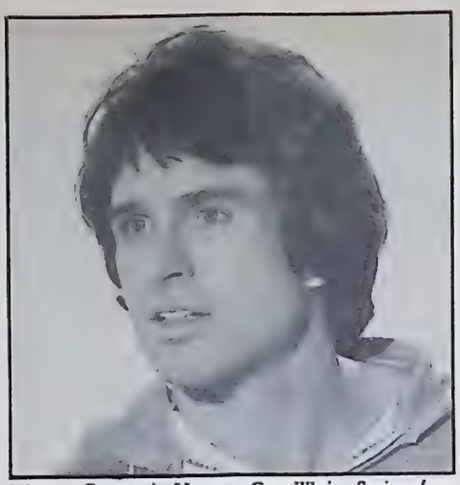
the heavyweight crown. True love, with the aid of Mr. Jordon, eventually triumphs after a series of mildly comic confusions and confrontations enlivened only by the posturing of Horton, the lovable spluttering of Gleason, and the sly urbanity of Rains. *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* cannot compare with such similar fare as *Topper* and *It's a Wonderful Life,* nor can it compare with Buchman's earlier comedies, such as *The Talk of the Town* and *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington.*

Beatty and his fellow scriptwriter Elaine May have made very few changes in the basic plot of *Here Comes Mr. Jordan.* The most important is a change in Mr. Jordan's lines. Claude Rains tells Montgomery that he will win because "it is written." James Mason simply says enigmatically that what will be, will be. Thus dramatic tension is preserved in *Heaven Can Wait.* Mr. Jordan knows what is written, but refuses to tell us. In the latter part of *Heaven,* the hero disappears into his final body, his previous personality totally erased. We mourn that disappearance and agonize over how Julie Christie can ever detect her true love in his new body. In *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* there is a longer withdrawal of the protagonist involving a lot of dull expositon.

Perhaps the best work is done in building up the parts of the murderous duo: the unfaithful wife and the ambitious secretary. In the original, Rita Johnson is a walking plot device, a bland block in the way of the two lovers; while John Amory, a lounge lizard with a pencil-thin moustache, provides only the vaguest indications of villainy. Dyan Cannon offers a bolder, brassier image as the wife. Moreover, her physical lushness is undercut with a series of running sight gags built around shattering crystal and the secretary's constant need to smother her hysterical outcries with a hand over the mouth. Charles Grodin, the seventies version of the lounge lizard as singles-bar wimp, is perfectly cast as the murderous but obsequious secretary. Whether explaining basic business immorality to his employer, talking to him from behind the curtains in the wife's bedroom, or advising the wife on the subtle points of murder, Grodin radiates the cowardly amorality of the middle-level executive.

Where *Shampoo* was raucously and unabashedly sexual in accordance with the party atmosphere of California in 1968 and its restoration comedy roots, *Heaven* is more clandestine about its adultery and more unashamedly romantic about the main love affair. The scenes between Cannon and Grodin are always conspiratory and shrill, while those between Beatty and Christie reflect a growing attraction based on their mutual innocent idealism.

Even the servants are given enough business to make a real contribution to the film's fast-paced, farcical humour. Their calm responses to Beatty's ignorance of his host body's past and the customs of the household, their dogged panting efforts to run pass patterns for Beatty in the garden, the butler's bland acceptance of Beatty's talking to himself (the angels) and his



Warren Beatty in Heaven Can Wait. *Swing low sweet Concorde.*

thoughtful inclusion of a second cup of cocoa for the invisible guest, and the recurring series of gags based on Beatty's predilection for meeting with his angels in a hall closet all enrich the visual comic texture of the film.

The finest sustained piece of comic writing and acting, however, is Beatty's speech to his board of directors, urging them to a higher morality and greater civic responsibility in football jargon and metaphor. The scene is beautifully prepared by the presence of the suspicious Christie, the nervous Grodin, the raucous press corps, and the baffled worried directors. Each has reason to be concerned about what Beatty will say, since the modern robber baron has been behaving in a peculiar manner. The audience understands that Beatty is trying to win the heart of Christie, but that he also really believes what he is saying, even though his language is ludicrously inappropriate. This scene, not in any way present in the original version, strikes most closely the note of the best Capra comedies: the populism, the idealism, and the awkward comic sincerity of the bumbling heroes. And we finally understand that Beatty aspires to be not the stud of his early William Inge and Tennessee Williams films, but the inheritor of the bumbling hero roles so often played by Stewart, Cooper, and Fonda. His persona in his best films of the past ten years has consistently been this type, an innocent wandering helplessly—and lovably—in a rapacious amoral world. There are clear links from Clyde Barrow through McCabe and George the hair stylist to Joe, the reincarnated quarterback.

Heaven Can Wait lacks the weight of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Shampoo,* but it demonstrates clearly that superb romantic comedies can still be made in the United States and that Warren Beatty is not just an actor but a genuine filmmaker. Elaine May deserves credit for the first draft of the script, Buck Henry for his work as co-director, and the superb cast for their consistently fine performances, but no lover of movies can deny that producer / writer / director / star Warren Beatty is the main creative force behind this hilarious and angelic romance.

Charles Gregory

A Paramount Pictures release. Director: Warren Beatty, Buck Henry. Producer: Beatty. Screenplay: Beatty, Elaine May. Camera: William A. Fraker. Sound: John K. Wilkinson, Tommy Overton. Editors: Robert C. Jones, Don Zimmerman. Music: Dave Grusin. Art Director: Edwin O'Donovan. Cast: Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, James Mason, Jack Warden, Charles Grodin, Dyan Cannon, Buck Henry, Vincent Gardenia, Joseph Maher, Dolph Sweet.

A Different Story / Aaron, dir.

"Homosexuality is portrayed as a social given, neither more nor less than any of the alternative lifestyles."

The week before *A Different Story* opened in New York City, the Gay Activists' Alliance circulated a "media alert" decrying the film as a "vile attempt to condemn *real* gays to limbo. It seems to say to its audience, 'It is better to be straight than gay; therefore, its two gay characters cannot love and live happily ever after with a member of their own sex; they must try to live a heterosexual lifestyle with each other.'"

The GAA's "media alert" points up a very real danger inherent in a political reading of any potential work of art, namely, the refusal to consider the aesthetic values of the work under attack. The first hour of *A Different Story* constitutes the finest piece of American filmmaking I've seen so far this year. In his delineation of the growing affection between a male hustler (Perry King) and a lesbian real-estate agent (Meg Foster) who are thrown together by fate, become roommates and eventually lovers, director Paul Aaron charts their relationship through a series of glances, gestures and behavioral nuances, cinematic language that has practically disappeared from the contemporary American cinema.

Furthermore, I do not feel that Aaron's film is anti-gay. This is a movie about two *people* coming together, acknowledging a mutual need and vulnerability, and deciding to work at some kind of life with one another. The fact that they both happen to be homosexual is beside the point. One of the movie's strengths is its

portrayal of homosexuality as a social given, presented as neither more nor less than any of the alternative lifestyles open to personal choice today. The way that Aaron integrates the gay world with the straight world, refusing to distort either one, blurs the distinction between "gay" and "straight" that gay activists have ostensibly been fighting to eliminate.

Remarkably, *A Different Story* is Paul Aaron's feature-length film debut. His direction is refreshingly "old fashioned" in the sense that the technique services the development of the narrative and the characters rather than vice versa. Aaron has stated in a *New York Post* interview that the work of George Cukor has had a major effect on him, an influence evident throughout this film. Like Cukor, Aaron dispenses with unnecessary cutting, preferring to let his story develop through a series of uninterrupted long takes. This directorial choice is especially effective in the scene where Perry King and Meg Foster first have sex, an encounter that begins as a drunken birthday celebration during which physical play imperceptibly dissolves into genuine eroticism. By refusing to cut during much of this scene, Aaron lets the conflicting emotions at work here register more subtly on the audience.

These long takes reveal yet another affinity Aaron shares with Cukor, his success with actors. The performances in *A Different Story* are uniformly excellent, their high quality encouraged and sustained by the time and space Aaron allows actors to develop a scene. Peter Donat as Perry King's former john, an effete orchestra conductor, manages to suggest the mixture of arrogance and desperation of a man who's used to paying for sex and affection. (The visual shorthand with which director Aaron limns their relationship over the film's credits is astonishing). Valerie Curtin as Meg Foster's neurotic lover also elicits compassion for a character who, in the hands of a lesser actress, would be totally unsympathetic.

But it is in the performances of his two leads that Aaron really triumphs. Perry King is a particular revelation, fulfilling the promise he has previously only indicated in Aldrich's *The Choir Boys*. He successfully hurdles the role reversals and contradictions the part requires. Whether observing his male keeper's cruising of a potential replacement, puttering around the kitchen in an apron, or beginning to realize himself by carving out a career as a clothes designer, King never hits a false note. Even he, however, pales in comparison to Meg Foster as his unlikely wife, lover and best friend. Free of the mannerisms of such currently "hot" actresses as Diane Keaton and Jill Clayburgh, Foster rings all the changes on her fascinating character, and then some. Her wry bewilderment at her transformation from an independent career woman into a wife and mother is simultaneously amusing and touching, and her frustration and exasperation over the exchange of roles that marriage and commitment bring, give the film's second half the solid emotional center it badly needs.

Meg Foster in A Different Story.

The first part of *A Different Story* is so good that the subsequent letdown becomes doubly disappointing. As King and Foster imperceptibly succumb to the prevailing standards of marriage and respectability, Aaron and his screenwriter Henry Olek resort to formulas and clichés gleaned from television sit-coms. Even in its later, weaker portions, however, the film continues to work on more than one level. It may be difficult to accept the couple's assimilation into suburban, middle-class married life, yet in a way, their alarming, almost subconscious acquiescence in the status quo gives the "happy ending" ironic, even tragic implications that the film's detractors have stubbornly ignored.

Nothing can really detract from this film's virtues though. Rationalizations and qualifications are unnecessary. Quite simply, Paul Aaron's *A Different Story* is the most auspicious first film I've seen in some time.

George Morris

An Avco Embassy release. Director: Paul Aaron. Producer: Alan Belkin. Screenplay: Henry Olek. Director of Photography: Philip Lathrop. Editor: Lynn McCallon. Music: David Frank. Cast: Perry King, Meg Foster, Valerie Curtin, Peter Donat, Richard Bull, Barbara Collentine.

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TAKE ONE

Jack Viertel + David Colker

The New New Hollywood

Steven Spielberg, Watch Your Ass

It's time for the New Hollywood again. It may seem like only yesterday we celebrated the breakthroughs of Coppola, Scorsese, DePalma, Spielberg, and George Lucas, but face it: any one of those boys can now make a six million dollar mistake without a single studio head rolling. They might as well be George Cukor, or Otto Preminger, for that matter.

The last year has seen the sudden ascendance of a newer model of director, bred out of every possible combination of television, sixties radicalism, film school, and the studio mailroom. The stuff of which dreams are made. Gone, for the most part, is the obsession with making new movies that look like old movies. Gone also is any semblance of chic pessimism, in favor of a seventies flavor—chaotic, but "up." With a couple of exceptions, the new director is a compulsive entertainer.

Where did they come from, and how did they arrive? In an attempt to discover the mechanism of the breakthrough, *Take One* interviewed six young, "hot" properties, all of whom had major movies open in the last year. They are: John Badham (*Saturday Night Fever*), Jeremy Kagan (*Heroes, The Big Fix*), Randal Kleiser (*Grease*), John Landis (*Kentucky Fried Movie, Animal House*), Claudia Weill (*Girlfriends*) and Bob Zemeckis, with Bob Gale (*I Wanna Hold Your Hand*).

The results prove that there are as many ways to get to the top as there are people who get there. The only general rule we have been able to draw, (and even *it* has one exception) is that people who get to be moviemakers begin by making movies.

Photographs by Richard Fish

JOHN LANDIS

At 28, John Landis has gained a reputation as Hollywood's resident lunatic. "I know that director," a writer said recently, upon having Landis pointed out to him, "I saw him wrestle a producer to the floor during a story conference once."

Lunatic or not, Landis has used his bottomless reserves of energy (interviewing him is exhausting) to move forward in the film industry by constantly getting himself to the wrong place at the wrong time.

The father of a friend of mine, Bundy Marquand, went to Yugoslavia to make a picture, and I asked him to get me a job on the film. It was *Kelly's Heroes*. And he wrote me a letter, telling me that he couldn't do it. There was no way. So I told my mother I had a job, took all my money, and got as far as London. I made my way to Belgrade by thumb, and the Orient Express, and a lot of walking. I finally found them. So there was no job, but I showed up. Fortunately for me the production was a total fuck-up. An international disaster. So I was able to get myself in, and by the time it was through I had made it up to a sort of assistant director. I ended up making almost five hundred dollars for nine months work. But I had a *wonderful* time.

I befriended a guy named Jim O'Rourke, and in two days we drove from Yugoslavia to Madrid. We took a jet to Almeria, and stayed there. Every movie you've ever seen was shot there. All the spaghetti westerns, spectaculars, everything. And we thought we had jobs. Well, when we got there, there were no jobs for us, but the guy said, "Can you do stunts?" So I said, "Sure." So he said, "Can you do horse falls?" So O'Rourke says, "Absolutely." I said, *"What?!"* and the next day I was falling off a horse. I just screamed and fell off. It was very realistic.

John Landis—in full costume for Schlock

We stayed, and I worked on over a hundred pictures, did every job you can do on a movie except make-up and hair. Mostly for French and Italian movies. The money was hard, but I learned a shitload. Finally, I got scared off by Franco's frontier police. They broke a lot of people's legs on an island off of Almeria. American and British kids. So I got out of there.

Back in Los Angeles, broke and with no job, Landis and O'Rourke conceived the notion of doing a soft-core porno-comedy, but the project never came to fruition.

In 1970, Pornos were highly illegal. But we had never seen a porno comedy, and it seemed like a good idea. We were trying to get it together when we were threatened by a mafioso-type person, who offered that we should come to work for him. It was very scary, and we backed out in a hurry.

So then I saw a movie called *Trog*, a monster movie with Joan Crawford, and it offended me so deeply that it was an inspiration. What offended me most was the filmmaker's open contempt for the audience. Just put the monster in, kill some people, thank you, give us the money. So this movie was so hysterical that I went home, and in one evening I wrote *Shlock*. Monster movies never lose money. I showed it to O'Rourke and he said, "Let's do this one." So we raised sixty thousand dollars, from my family, his family, and gamblers. And we made a serviceable picture. Twelve minutes or so are really good. And I ended up playing the monster myself. The picture got a lot of attention when it opened in Los Angeles, and I was offered a lot of black exploitation films, and I quit six of them between getting hired and shooting. I got a reputation as a troublemaker. The majors wouldn't touch me. But I went on Johnny Carson to talk about *Shlock* and David Zucker, of "Kentucky Fried Theatre," saw me. Kentucky Fried had this revue running in Los Angeles for four years, and they said, "We want to make a movie too." So David called me, and every day for a year we all met on Sunday and wrote a script.

Was that easier to finance than Shlock*?*

Not at all. When we got done adapting the show, and adding new material, I knew there was no way we could raise the money based on our package: Landis, a young producer named Bob Weiss, and the boys from Kentucky Fried Theatre. So the boys got together thirty thousand dollars, and we shot ten minutes. Since the movie was bits, you could do that. We showed it at the Nuart (a Los Angeles theatre specializing in old and cult movies) and there was such a riot that the man who owned the theatre took the short to San Francisco and came back with the money, from the United Artists Theatre chain. And the picture made a lot of money. I'm very unhappy with it. It was recut and damaged a lot, but how can you argue with all those profits?

How did that lead to Animal House*?*

Crazy, as always. The script girl on *Kentucky Fried* had a boyfriend named Sean Daniels, who was developing *Animal House* for Universal, and she kept telling him about the crazy things that were going on on the set of *Kentucky Fried*. He saw my cut of the picture, luckily, and I was hired. I walked around in a daze. I couldn't believe it.

Are you glad to be out of the independent racket? Working for a major?

I don't care. I'm willing to do anything to make movies. I've just signed to do *A Connecticut Yankee* for Universal, and I'm developing a picture that I hope will be like the *Wizard of Oz*, called *Big Trouble*, and those are big, studio-type pictures. With the studio you can get lots of bureaucratic hassle, lots of money wasted, and, of course, they're just as crooked as the independents. But I'm willing to put up with an inordinate number of assholes and a lot of shit to make the movies I want to make.

CLAUDIA WEILL

Claudia Weill is unique among the six directors, for a variety of reasons. She is, of course, the only woman. She is the only one to emerge from the world of documentary filmmaking, and the only one who has not moved to Los Angeles, the only one who answers her own phone. She is also the only one who mentioned Bonnie and Clyde *as a major film in her past. Five years ago,* Bonnie and Clyde *was on everyone's list; it's influence is beginning to lag.*

How did you get started? Were you making films in the basement?

I must tell you, I don't go to a lot of films, even now. I was a painter in high school, and then I got involved in still photography. The summer of my junior year (at Harvard) I got a job as a production assistant on a documentary feature for United Artists on Haight Ashbury. I was working for free, doing every conceivable odd job, picking up laundry for the director, taking dailies to the lab, it was great. I got to learn all the different jobs. When I got back to New York, Carl Lerner, who cut the film, made me his assistant. He was a great old-time editor, and he was incredibly supportive. But I wasn't very aware of films. I was interested, but I wasn't a cinéaste. I did see some films by Godard, which really stunned me, completely.

I went back to Harvard, and started to assistant-teach a film course there. With the money I got from that, plus some money I had, I made two short films. *Metropole* was about go-go dancers, and *Radcliffe Blues: Fran* was an interview, about the making of a radical. So by the time I graduated from college, I had two films to show around.

Was your training at this point mostly technical, or critical?

I had no training at all. I would just take three hundred dollars, and make a film.

Weill continued to make small documentary projects, a fund-raising film for the Putney School in Vermont, a portrait of a black ghetto family in Washington, D.C.,

and a film on the Aspen International Design Conference. She became an expert at grant applications and low-budget fundraising. The earlier films led to the making of seventeen short films for Sesame Street *and seven five minute films for WNET-13, New York Public Television.*

In 1972 I made a film called *Joyce at 34* about a woman who has a job and a baby. In dealing with the problems of working and mothering, she becomes closer to her own mother. It was a documentary, and I decided to distribute it myself. I went looking for endorsements, and I reached Shirley MacLaine. She agreed to look at the film, and she liked it very much. She told me about a film she had planned, and asked me if I wanted to go to China. So I got to go and make *The Other Half of the Sky—A China Memoir.* Shirley MacLaine produced it. It covered the first American Women's Friendship Delegation visiting mainland China. [*The Other Half of the Sky—A China Memoir* was nominated for the Academy Award, Best Feature Documentary, in 1975.]

How did that lead to the decision to suddenly make a fictional film, like Girlfriends*?*

When I finished *Other Half* I was really sick of making documentary films. I didn't know what to do, but I applied for a grant, took an acting job, got a job directing theatre, and just went into a kind of interim period. I started thinking about the idea for a film, and a grant came through from the American Film Institute. So I called up Vicki Polon, and we talked about the idea, and she began working on the screenplay.

Did you have to raise additional money?

I had to raise a lot of money. There were other grants, and I have a lot of debts, loans, liens, and whatnot.

How long did it take?

Well, we started shooting in '75, and didn't finish until '77. We ended up raising a lot of money from people we didn't know —just investors. The film cost a half a million dollars.

How did Warner Brothers get involved?

I called John Calley on the phone, and asked them to look at it. I think they were pleased to find a woman who was directing.

Did you feel, as a "woman director," that you have some responsibility to other women with this film? If Girlfriends *falls short somehow, will it reflect on other women as far as the industry is concerned?*

It will, but you can't think that way. I feel a lot of pressure, but I can't define it as a special pressure on me *because* I'm a woman. It's just always there. I don't know what it feels like to be a man.

JOHN BADHAM

Like many directors of the thirties and forties, John Badham emerged from the rank and file employment rolls of the studio, working his way up from the mailroom. Drawn to Hollywood from Yale Drama School by his sister's acting career (Mary Badham had a major role in To Kill A Mockingbird*) Badham took four months to find the Universal mailroom job. Within six weeks he had made himself a tour guide on the newly formed Universal Tour.*

Meanwhile, I was going around the lot, interviewing for every job that was posted. Finally I was picked as a casting director, along with Marc Norman (author of *Oklahoma Crude*) and Mike Medavoy. They both left in short order to do bigger and better things, and I thought I'd be stuck in casting forever. But I got to be friendly with a lot of people on sets, directors, photographers. I had no film education, but for my job I had to see everything that came out. So my film knowledge is based mostly on the Universal pictures of the late sixties. I'm a minor authority. Some pretty awful pictures, but with some fascinating work in them. You learn from these awful sources. It was a whole new world to me. I'd never been serious about film before.

How did the first break come?

I'll never know how it happened. One day (Universal vice-president) Jennings Lang called me up out of the blue, and assigned me to Jerry Adler, who was supervising television movies. I have no idea how or why. Maybe he thought I was someone else, or some filing mistake was made. But suddenly, I was working on television movies. Mysterious. No one knew exactly what the job was, so I got to do almost anything I wanted. I began to work with editors, making sixty-second previews for the movie of the week. I began to understand what you could do with different little pieces of film.

So you were headed in the right direction.

Exactly. I associate produced, did casting, checked wardrobe—everything. Then came a pilot, called "Dial Hotline," about kids who talk to people in trouble. But Universal didn't know what the series would be like, so Bill Sackheim, the producer, proposed that we do a little three-minute film explaining what the series would be, and tack that film onto the end of the pilot. In a flash of inspiration, I asked to direct it, and Sackheim said, "Sure." He wrote it, and I shot it in one day. It was three guys sitting in a projection room, watching the pilot, and one of them says, "That's good, but what's the series going to be like?" You can imagine the rest. We walked them out of the room, and through a couple of stairwells. We shot it on a Monday, and it was shipped to New York the following Wednesday afternoon. And that little film got me my first job, directing an hour episode of "The Senator."

From the first episode he directed, Badham was in demand as a television director, and he managed to work at least one episode each of such shows as "Streets of San Francisco," "Kung Fu," "Police Story," "The Bold Ones," and "Night Gallery." As he became more successful, he began to make Movies of the Week, and gradually left episodic television behind in favor of such works as The Impatient Heart, Isn't it Shocking? *and, finally,* The Law.

The Law was the most critically successful, and Universal began looking around seriously for a feature for me to do. I turned down four movies that they wanted me for, which got them very aggravated. Pictures like *Swashbuckler, Sentinel,* eight million dollar movies. Big movies. But there's no director in the world who can make a good movie out of a bad script. Doing those movies would have been just like holding a gun to my head.

So you took one over.

Bingo Long. Spielberg was supposed to do it, but he got tied up by *Jaws.* They asked me to do it, and that one I liked. There were problems with the structure that we never really solved, and there were some cast problems. Richard Pryor was enormously difficult to work with. But there was one scene in the picture, where the team learns to cakewalk from an old barber in a small town in Georgia. Eventually the whole town joins in and parades through town. I was a big help that day; I spent the whole day crying.

The Bingo Long Traveling All Stars and Motor Kings *was a moderate box office disappointment because, Badham feels, the studio never figured out a way to get people into the theatre.*

People like it when they see it, but we couldn't talk anyone into going in the first place. Black baseball: who cares?

After Bingo Long, *Badham and Motown president Rob Cohen set about adapting* The Wiz, *but Badham resigned after a dispute over the casting of Diana Ross, and was replaced by Sidney Lumet. At the same time, John Avildsen was dismissed as director of* Saturday Night Fever, *and once again, Badham stepped into someone else's film.*

I was hired with two and a half weeks of preproduction left. We found all new locations, I fired half the staff and brought in my own people, and we cut sixty pages out of the script. But it was a very good script, and we had very good songs, and from those two it was easy to see that you could do it. A lot of running around, getting up early, working late, and we cast it, put it together, and got it shooting.

Did you have any idea of what the reaction would be?

We all thought it was gonna be good, and do OK. Predictions were twenty to twenty-five million, domestic, and I thought that was great. I was more than satisfied. It's at ninety-three million at the moment.

Are you happy with the movie?

Given more time we might have come up with some better solutions, cleaned out one or more of the excess stories, gotten rid of the Puerto Rican fight, which seemed like a good idea at the time. But everything ties together in the script. Everything leans hard on everything else, which makes it difficult to drop anything out. We needed more time at the beginning, but we didn't have it. Given that, I'm happy.

Randal Kleiser

Randal Kleiser went the film school route, coming out to U.S.C. from his native Philadelphia, where he had been making 8mm films since age twelve.

When I was in ninth grade I borrowed all the plants in the neighborhood, set them up down in the basement, and made a film called "Jungle Detective." It was a pilot for a series. I never understood the logic of it, that a detective in the African jungle is going to have a hard time finding clients. I just made it. I converted the basement into beaches and city streets. And when I wanted to come to film school, U.S.C. was one of the only ones, so I came. I was always making films.

And once there, you made a real film.

Right. Called *Peege*. It's about a grandmother dying in a nursing home, and the one family member who can communicate with her. I did it as a master's thesis for U.S.C. It was about a half hour long, 16mm, and it cost about $10,000 to make. I got bank loans for half, and a guy I knew put up half. I showed it to Universal to see if they'd like to distribute it, and instead of distributing it, they wanted to use me. They wanted me to direct television.

Did you feel any conflict about doing television instead of film?

I met with George Lucas, who was my roommate in college, and asked him if I should just continue writing screenplays instead. He told me that if I did TV at least people would think of me as a director, not a writer who wanted to direct. So I did it.

That must have been quite a sudden leap into the big time.

It was scary. The first day I went in to do my first show, "Marcus Welby," I had an idea about the lighting. I thought it was too bright. So I told them to take it down, and make it softer. And while I was setting up a shot I hear this commotion, and I turn around, and Robert Young is lying on the floor unconscious. He tripped over a dolly because it was so dark. Luckily he woke up and went through the day without a word of complaint. That was baptism by fire.

After that I did a lot of television, episodes and movies. But I really wanted to do a film that was mine again, so I got together two student crews, one here [Los Angeles] one in New York, and we made a companion piece to *Peege*. The non-theatrical company that distributed *Peege* put up the money. It was wonderful to do, working the film through, editing it myself in the house, on weekends. Plus, I find most union crews in Hollywood drain you of energy, while a student crew infuses you with energy. They're so enthusiastic that they help you keep going.

How did you distribute this little film?

We sold it to television as a weekend special, and we're distributing it educationally. It's called *Portrait of Grandpa Doc*. It's been shown a couple of times and will be shown once more.

How did Grease *come about?*

Well, I had done a film with Travolta, a television movie called *Boy in the Plastic Bubble*, and we had gotten along real well, and I had done a film called *All Together Now* for the Robert Stigwood Organization, and that was like the only Stigwood film to come in on time and on budget. Stigwood barely knew who I was, but I think he looked at his figures, and saw this one little film that had worked out. And that got him interested. And I think Travolta had a lot to do with it. I originally had a meeting about doing *Saturday Night Fever*, but before I knew it I had been switched to *Grease*. I think Stigwood felt I'd be better on a picture that wasn't so street tough.

Once again, it was a big leap. Your first feature was not only a feature, it was huge, presold, with big stars, music, dancing and the reputation of a Broadway hit.

I said to myself, well this is good. Things can only get easier.

I think the best training I had for *Grease* was that I was an extra when I was going to college. I worked in a lot of musicals. I was in several Elvis Presley movies, *Camelot*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and I got to watch how big Hollywood musicals were put together, how a dance number was covered, how the playback worked, and the pace of everything. And I talked a lot to George Cukor and Robert Wise, who advised me to listen to all the people around me. On a musical they frequently know more than the director does about what to do, musically at least.

Are you happy with Grease*?*

Very. It was a very collaborative effort. [Choreographer] Pat Birch had been with it from the beginning of the play, and she knew everything that worked and everything that didn't. She was tremendously helpful. We did blow up the show in a typical Hollywood fashion.

Did you fight that at all?

No, we went with it. It added a fun spirit to it. If we'd tried to fight it, tried to make it look like Chicago in 1959, it would have constricted us. The way we did it was we got all these people and trucks and everything and said, "Let's make a movie," and just had fun, we didn't really try to make anything serious. And we hope, we *hope* that the spirit in which we were all doing it comes across on the screen.

Jeremy Kagan

Jeremy Kagan never wanted to be a filmmaker. The son of a New York rabbi / psychologist / novelist, he grew up in a world of scholarship and culture. The transition from Russian Studies major to director came slowly, and began as nothing more than a way to avoid graduate school.

When I was in high school I was studying Russian, and I went to the movies to help learn it. And by mistake, I saw *Alexander Nevsky*. It was like nothing I'd ever seen in my life. The graphic composition was so dynamic that it rivetted me. I never wanted to make films then; I was not one of those kids who ran around with an 8mm camera and wanted someday to be Howard Hawks. I never heard of Howard Hawks 'till four years ago.

Were you mainly influenced by foreign filmmakers?

All Europeans. Pasolini, Renoir, Truffaut, and then, in college, Godard. I was also a cartoonist, and I was a big fan of Disney cartoons, and Warner cartoons, Chuck Jones and Tex Avery.

In college [Harvard] I wanted to major in visual studies, and combine it with psychology, but they wouldn't let me, so I continued in Russian studies.

I still didn't want to be a filmmaker, necessarily, but I decided to write my thesis on Eisenstein. I wanted to be a specialist in media and education. I wanted to devise new systems of teaching, using the technology, and the psychology of learning. So I went to the Education School, because my background has always been that if you go to school you'll get something. They said, "Get your Ph.D." Now is when I decided to be a filmmaker. I got a scholarship to NYU and I made a lot of little films there. A cartoon called *Once Upon a Line*, a movie called *How Do You Seduce A Woman?*, and I borrowed money from my father for a movie called *The What-Did-You-Think-of-the-Movie Movie*. They were quasi-documentary. I hadn't finished it, but The American Film Institute gave me a fellowship. They bought the film, so I could finish it and pay my father back. That movie opened the 1972 New York Film Festival.

So that experience put you on the West Coast?

And for the first time I learned about American movies, starting with John Ford and the comedians: Preston Sturges and Leo McCarey. I felt some discomfort about switching my allegiance to American movies, but I really discovered how deep the content was in many of them.

When did the transition to professional directing begin?

While I was at the AFI, making a film called *The Love Song of Charles Faberman*, a man named Frank Pierson called me. He'd seen the *What-Do-You-Think* movie, and he and James Garner were doing a show called "Nichols." I had no money, and he asked me if I'd like to direct one of them. You bet. I didn't know if I could work with a crew of fifty people—I work with crews of three people. I had never seen 35mm film. I came on the set and watched someone else direct, and then I did it. It was not difficult, and I'm a speedy person, so the pressure didn't bother me. About two months later, Peter Falk asked me to do a "Columbo." On the basis of the "Nichols" and *What-Did-You-Think*.

So you were off and running.

I could have been. But I did a "Bold Ones," and it was an awful experience. It was about Lesbianism, and the studio cut it

up and the network cut the shit out of it, and I said to hell with it. I'd had my experience, and I just quit for a year. But I was offered a great after school special, and I couldn't turn it down. It was nominated for an Emmy, and I started doing two-hour movies. So I went back to Jerry Eisenberg, who had produced the special, and told him I wanted to do something about the sixties. He wanted to do something on terrorists, and I said, "This one, I want to write." So he let me write it and it turned out to be *Katherine*. It took almost two years. I wrote it, directed it, and established my relationship with Henry Winkler, and when he became big, that's how I got my first feature job.

In the meantime, there was Scott Joplin.

Right. Which didn't hurt, because Universal made it as a TV movie, then thought it was good enough to show as a feature. It's not very well written, but there are wonderful things in it. I had done well with it, the studio thought, and I was close to Henry [Winkler] and I got *Heroes,* which I'm very happy with. It got bad notices, but the picture works for audiences. I've sat there in theatres across the country and watched them laugh and cry. That's all I ever meant. And I *love The Big Fix.*

Did that come out of Heroes?

No. Dreyfuss loved *Katherine*. His partner, Carl Borak, saw *Heroes*. And *Heroes* made me "hot," because it made a lot of money.

I'll tell you. There are four things you have to have to be a director. You have to have ambition, you have to have perseverence, you have to have luck, and you have to have talent. You *must* have all four. And enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is my favorite word, because it means "the God within." That's what you're trying to do, put the God in people. In your cast and your crew, and, ultimately, in your audience. If you do it, that's worth two hours of their life.

Bob Zemeckis & Bob Gale

Real team filmmaking is a rare thing in Hollywood. Every film is some kind of team effort, but the teams are normally thrown together by hungry producers and agents, and called "packages." Bob Zemeckis and Bob Gale are a team more akin to the three musketeers, or Burns and Allen. As writer / director (Zemeckis) and writer / producer (Gale) they amount to one whole auteur. There is serious question as to whether they would ever use such a term, however. As filmmakers, they place themselves in the center vein of the American mainstream.

Gale: We met at USC film school, because everyone was talking about Louis Malle, and we were talking about Clint Eastwood.

Zemeckis: When I was a kid, I just liked great American movies. I was making super-8 films in the basement, but I wasn't a film "buff." One of my favorite movies of all time was *The Great Escape.*

Gale: Bob was the only person I knew who had the soundtrack album, besides me. So we figured we must be compatible. When *I* was a kid, I would just look at the ads, see how many guys got killed in a movie, and if enough guys got killed, I would go. I wasn't studying "style."

We're both big Disney fans, and I learned how to draw by copying Disney figures. I also have a tremendous admiration for Warner cartoons, and especially Chuck Jones.

Zemeckis: When we got to film school, our heroes were our contemporaries, who had just gotten out: Coppola, George Lucas, John Milius, and Steve Spielberg. I made a student film called *Field of Honor.* About a guy who gets out of a mental hospital and goes around killing a lot of people, but at the end you realize the world was crazier than he was. It was one of those. The soundtrack was *The Great Escape.* It had a lot of production values and action for a student film, and it won the student Academy Award. I showed it to Milius, who was a USC graduate, and I met Spielberg in a course. This was before *Jaws.* I asked him to look at the film, and he said he would. But what happens? These guys look at your film and they say, "It's fine, it's very nice," but then what? You try to keep in touch with them, but you don't have anything to say to them.

So I began to sneak on the lot. It's very easy to sneak on almost any lot in town. I came to Universal. Every morning I would arrive—I got so familiar that I began driving in—I would park in George Lucas's space. He was always in San Francisco. I knew he would never need his space. I would hang around and eat meals off the companies that were shooting on the lot. You get to know the assistant directors. They don't mind.

Gale: So we saw an opportunity in television, by seeing how things work.

Zemeckis: We started looking to the lowest-rated shows on television. You can't walk into MTM and tell them you want to write for "Rhoda," but when "Kolchak the Nightstalker" is at the bottom of the ratings, and they have to think up a new monster for Kolchak to battle every week, they'll read anything. So Bob and I would whip up these TV things, and I'd just walk into the producer's office. We had an idea about a headless motorcycle phantom who comes back from the fifties. The *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* updated. We were very proud of it. We created our own folklore, and they bought it.

Gale: After a few more, Universal offered us a writing contract, but it was never our intention to write for television. So we asked everyone we knew what to do, and they unanimously advised us not to sign it. Having turned down a Universal writing contract, we were able to get a good agent.

Zemeckis: At our first meeting with him he said, "Boys, I never want to hear the word television again." So we wrote a script on spec, and got it to John Milius. He called us into his office, and told us he wanted us to do a script for him, if we had an idea, and we came up with *1941,* about an air raid on Los Angeles. Spielberg read the script, and he wanted to make the movie. He was down in Alabama shooting *Close Encounters,* and he flew us down to make revisions.

Gale: While we were down there, we came up with this story that became *I Wanna Hold Your Hand.* We always knew it was going to be about girls, girls chasing the Beatles, and since we didn't have enough clout to make a deal on it, we went to two female producers, Alex Rose and Tamara Asseyev. They got real excited about it. In the meantime Spielberg read *that* script, and he said to Bob [Zemeckis], "You should direct it."

Zemeckis: But Warner Brothers had the deal, and they didn't like the script, and they wouldn't go with a first time director. So they let it go. Steve took it to Universal, offering himself as executive producer, and they made a deal within twenty-four hours. That was in August of '77, and they said, "We're making a deal, but we *must* have the picture in theatres on April 21." So we had eight months, and it was an incredible experience, but we won't do it again. In editing you have to go through phases. When you first assemble the movie you're practically catatonic 'cause it's so awful. Then for a couple of weeks you like the movie, then you hate everything in the movie. You need to go through all of that, and there wasn't time.

The movie played well in previews. We never had any negative response to the movie. Reviews were favorable, and we thought we had a smash. We had heard the sneak audience in New York bursting into applause five, six times during the movie. Then it opened, and dropped dead. It can't be bad word of mouth: Not enough people have seen the movie to kill it by word of mouth. There is simply *no* audience. It's the worst thing that can happen to you: dropping dead.

Gale: We were very idealistic. We thought a good movie would find its audience. The executives in charge of distributing movies tell you there's a science to it, but there's no science. We don't know why there was no publicity on the movie, or why they opened it in April, or anything. It just didn't work.

Zemeckis: But the point is *we* don't know how to sell a movie either. If *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* had cleaned up, we'd think the people up in distribution were geniuses. Luckily, we really want to write for a while. We have a new project for Spielberg, *After School.* I don't think this is the end of our careers as filmmakers, but our next project will be small. You can't think about it. The only thing a filmmaker can do, I guess, is pray.

Jack Viertel and David Colker are freelancers in Los Angeles. Their most recent work has appeared in New Times, News West, *and the Los Angeles* Times.

David Overbey:

CANNES

Report from the festival

All the clichés about the Cannes Festival remain essentially true year after year. From the overcrowding and over-pricing to the combination freak show / whore house atmosphere in which flesh and footage are displayed and sold by the inch, all of that and more are merely the given conditions one accepts each year. You may complain about them while at Cannes, but the complaints are without real heat or indignation, for what actually distinguishes one Cannes Festival from another—all personal and professional considerations aside—are the films themselves. Not all of them, of course, for it is another given that the majority of the nearly 500 films screened will be rotten. To be successful, all any Cannes Festival really needs is a mere handful of first-rate films—enough to provide a steady, but not necessarily constant, source of cinematic energy to sustain one through the patches of mediocrity or worse. Judged in that way, this year's festival was easily the best in years.

It didn't really even seem to matter that the screen at the Palais was clogged with the usual crap, from the commercial garbage like Hal Ashby's *Coming Home* and Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman,* the hilariously pretentious like Jules Dassin's *A Dream of Passion,* to the murkily pretentious like Carlos Saura's *Los Ojos Vendados* and the exploitatively pretentious like Alan Parker's *Midnight Express.* Even the disappointments of Krzysztof Zanussi's coldly tedious *Spirale* and Louis Malle's stillborn *Pretty Baby* were not finally enough to depress anyonè, for there were more than enough good films programmed around them at the Palais, or in the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, the Perspectives du Cinéma Français, and the Film Market to more than sustain energy and enthusiasm.

Malle's American failure aside, the French cinema demonstrated this year that for all the talk of economic and creative crisis here, it is still very much alive, and that both veteran and new directors are working at a very high level of achievement. Claude Chabrol represented France in competition for this first time with *Violette Nozière,* his finest film since *Une Partie du Plaisir* and his most accessible since *Les Noces Rouges.* He recounts the true-life story of that ambiguous lady who killed her father and tried to murder her mother in the Paris of the 30s. The film slashes away at bourgeois concepts of family and "virtue" with Chabrol's usual mastery of technique and wonderfully nasty sense of the absurd, with the added element of a virtue most of his critics (and admirers) usually deny him: compassion.

In the Official Competition, the Perspectives, the Film Market, and Unifrance's series of screenings, there were at least one hundred new French films at Cannes. Of those, a surprisingly high number were more than just "interesting" or "promising," and might easily hold their own at any international festival; Jean-François Stévenin's *Passe-Montagne,* Paul Vecchiali's *La Machine,* Francis Girod's *L'Etat Sauvage,* Pierre Schoendoerffer's *Le Crabe Tambour* are merely the titles which come to mind at once. Perhaps the best film by a new director, however, was Luc Béraud's *La Tortue sur le Dos.* Béraud was co-scenarist and assistant on the films of Claude Miller (who collaborated on the script, and acts in *Tortue*). Like many young directors working on a first film in France, Béraud had no money and so was forced to use his imagination and talent instead. *Tortue* is seemingly simple, yet it manages to make its "intimist" and personal story confront the major malaise of the majority of French artists and writers—the separation of French intellectuals from experience outside class and *cadre.* Paul wrote a fairly successful book six years ago, and has suffered "writer's block" ever since—a "block" which extends to his relationship with Camille, a professor who supports him by varnishing furniture. She finally throws him out, and his experience as a penniless vagabond in Paris feeds his imagination and melts his "block." With a daring shift in tone half way through the film, Béraud switches from "realism" to an almost surrealistic use of Paris locations to create a constantly dissolving nightmare which acts as both catalyst and setting for Paul's spiritual renewal.

The Italians kept a rather low profile at Cannes this year, although they ended by again winning the Palme d'Or. Italian friends insisted there was not much to bring to Cannes: Rosi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* was finished too late, Scola had just begun shooting, and so on. Ironically, they turned, for a film to place in competition, to a major director who has been unjustly overlooked and forgotten at home almost as much as he has been on the international scene: Ermanno Olmi. Of all the Italian cinéastes, Olmi is the one who has never given in to fashion and fads, or to the dictates of the market place, remaining faithful to his own almost ascetic moral and aesthetic vision, which corresponds in several important ways with the morality and aesthetics of the theoretical precepts of neo-realism. Indeed, in many ways his *L'Albero Degli Zoccoli* is the film which neo-realists always talked about but somehow never made. It is the lyrically realistic recreation of the life of a group of Bergamo peasants, with neither plot nor "character." The film follows five families through the seasons as they plant, harvest, tend to animals, have children, marry, and die. The film exists at that point where documentary and fiction meet; an intimate epic in the mainstream of Italian realism, it is Olmi's masterpiece.

Although Fassbinder was very much in evidence at Cannes, it was probably a good thing that there were no films from the other two festival favorites of the New German Cinema, Wenders and Herzog, for it meant that a number of new or usually overlooked directors got some international attention too often unjustly denied them, including Wolfgang Petersen (*Die Konsequenz*), Hans W. Geissendörfer (*The Glass Cell*), Peer Raben (*Adele Spitzeder*), Theodor Kotulla (*Aus Einem Deutschen Leben*), Uwe Brander (*Halbe-Halbe*), and Niklaus Schilling (*Rheingold*). It was, nonetheless, Fassbinder who get the lion's share of attention. His was certainly the most personal, if not necessarily the most moving, section of *Deutschland im Herbst,* a deeply felt and intelligent collective film (co-directed by Kluge, Brustellin, Reitz, Rupé, Cloos, Sinkel, Mainka, and Schlöndorff) about the political climate in Germany since the Schleyer affair. *Despair,* Fassbinder's first film in English, is a brilliant, if not totally successful film (Tom Stoppard's script turns a bit precious and murky from time to time), in which the alienation and horror of the period of Hitler's first push towards power is effectively used as the social background the malaise of which permeates personal relationships. What Bergman's *Serpent's Egg* failed to do in its unconvincing, portentous hysteria, Fassbinder has brought off with elegance and irony—helped, of course, by a brilliant performance by Dirk Bogarde and a dazzling score by Peer Raben.

Although the Americans at first appeared a bit awash in the commercial cop-outs of the Ashby and Mazursky, they came through at least three times with films that were bursts of sustaining and invigorating cinematic professionalism. The "discovery" of the last week was Robert Young, whose *Alambrista* made its economic-social-political points without ever losing sight of the human context from which they spring as it followed a young Mexican entering the

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David Overbey is Take One*'s Paris correspondent.*

OSHIMA IN PARIS

REACHING FOR THE FLAME

By John Hughes

Dec. 11, 1977. Received a telegram from Paris today. "Oshima expected here Dec. 31 to begin editing a new film, *Le Fantôme de l'amour.* You will be only journalist allowed to observe editing of film, as guest of Argos Films. Respond immediately. Amicably, Anatole Dauman." The text of the telegram is read to me on the phone by a friend who has called me at the Central Park South home of Sid Geffen and Jackie Raynal, with whom I am dining. Sid, who has shown many Dauman-produced films (*Hiroshima, Marienbad, Two or Three Things,* etc.) at his New York theatres, smiles impishly, brings over one of the telephones that are scattered throughout his living room, dials for the international operator, and hands me the phone. Following an irresistible impulse (although it is nearly midnight in Paris) I call Dauman

and am relieved to hear music and voices in the background (or in the *offspace,* as they say in *Cahiers*) when Dauman answers. Hearing the anxiety in my voice, he assumes the patriarchal cordiality that is one of his favorite roles. "It will be a dream for you, my dear Hughes. I will repay you for leading me through the savagery of New York by showing you the civilization of Paris. And we shall drink much sake with Oshima. A bientôt." Afterwards, a long and delirious talk with Sid and Jackie until 4 A.M. about Oshima, Dauman, *In the Realm of the Senses* and my P.R. work for it in New York, Lacan and the Parisian psychoanalytic scene, and much else. As I'm leaving Sid delivers one of his typical latenight orations: "The obscure cabdriver-critic becomes an international journalist with an inside line to the greatest director and producer in the world. What a story—somebody should make a film out of it..."

Jan. 2, 1978. I'm staying at "the new house," the five-storey mansion which Dauman is having renovated and which is across the street from his exquisite flat near Place Victor Hugo. I have dinner with Dauman, who tells me that I'll be able to see a rough cut of the film later this week—Oshima and his crew, who are staying at a nearby hotel, have been working twelve-hour days at the St. Cloud studios preparing the final cut. During the dinner (Lemon-flavored chicken prepared by Maryse, Dauman's Moliere-esque cook-confidante) Dauman talks about his involvement with Rouch, Resnais and Oshima, and his fascination with the Orient. "I'm always delighted to think that 'Oshima' rhymes with 'Hiroshima,'" Dauman says. During the cheese course, as Maryse listens uncomprehendingly (before the dinner she has told me that she "has never had the least desire to learn even a word of English"—a typical Parisian attitude), Dauman describes the astonishing footage that Oshima has brought from Japan. Finally, while Maryse pours the plum liqueur, the jet-lag-ridden listener gets his reward—Dauman exits through the hidden door in the book-case and returns with a set of production photos. An instant burst of adrenalin when I look at them. Fiery sunsets streaming down on a weary rickshawman bearing his burden. Forest landscapes like a Hokusai woodcut in the manner of Auguste Renoir. Gleaming torchlit bodies writhing in sexual ecstasy on the earthen floor of a peasant hut... As I prepare to leave, Dauman is agonizing over the film's title. He's afraid *Phantom of Love* will remind everyone of Bunuel...

Jan. 5. Have spent a couple of days following Dauman around Paris—breakfast in the little kitchen with Maryse, morning at the Argos office in Neuilly or at a board meeting at the troubled Cinémathèque, lunch with a personal friend at the Place Victor Hugo flat (yesterday Jean Rouch talked about *Les Maîtres fous* as "an eerie prediction of people like Idi Amin"), an afternoon screening (today it was Borowczyk's inspired Rouchian documentary on the painter Ljuba, who is a friend of Dauman), an evening swim and sauna at "Cercle Foch," in front of which Baron Empain was kidnapped (the only event in the headlines which can compete with the forthcoming left-right clash in the elections), and a long dinner with one of Dauman's fellow-producers to prepare strategy for their attack on the French Government's destructive influence on the cinema (i.e. high taxes and lots of movies on prime-time TV)... Everyone I talk to, including old friends from New York or new friends here, wants to know about Oshima. But I've promised Dauman not to tell anyone about the screening tomorrow at St. Cloud, where I shall finally meet Nagisa Oshima...

Jan. 6. I'm watching the incredibly bright steel-grey sky over the Bois as Dauman drives towards St. Cloud. *Les Carabiniers* and the Parisian flashbacks in *Ulysses* come immediately to mind. Dauman shakes his head. "On such a morning in Paris you must think of Max Jacob: 'Grey like the inside of an oyster.'" ... As we approach the screening room I feel like I'm walking on eggs—Dauman has gingerly let slip the fact that "Oshima may be upset over a stranger coming to see his film." But, upon meeting him outside the screening room, I'm instantly put at ease by Oshima's

politeness and charm. It's impossible to be nervous in the presence of someone so complex—one is overwhelmed by the fascination and curiosity one feels (I remember feeling the same relieved insightfulness when I met Bunuel) after meeting a human being who is so young yet so old, so nervous yet so serene, so obdurate yet so willing to please... Oshima begins to laugh when Dauman, after introducing me, begins his usual rap about the "barbarism" of the reaction of the American critics, audiences and Customs officials to *In the Realm of the Senses.* Oshima, noticing my discomfort, giggles shrilly at Dauman and says "But John is a friend, you mustn't make him feel guilty about that..." Then several of Oshima's Japanese colleagues emerge from the projection booth, talking animatedly with Michael Wilson, the suave *Positif* critic who is one of Dauman's chief assistants. We all head into the screening room—before the film begins I notice Oshima moving from seat to seat in the front rows, as if trying to pick the ideal place from which to see his film. He finally sits in the dead center of the room and becomes totally immobile... Not overwhelmed easily (my allegiance to Brecht is ingrained by now), I'm nevertheless bowled over by Oshima's images—I find myself flinching during most of the film's powerful moments. I now understand what Dauman meant when he said my trip would be "a dream." I have, of course, read the scenario many times during the last week, I know the story by heart... The aging yet splendidly sensual peasant woman, Seki, who gets sexually involved with the boisterous village wastrel, Toyoji (played by Tatsuya Fuji from *Realm*) to the point where they are forced by passion to strangle Seki's husband, a sympathetic timeworn rickshawman named Gisaburo. Then the return of Gisaburo as a whitefaced ghost who timidly and inexorably haunts the couple into guilt, madness, blindness (for Seki) and destruction. But I'm totally unprepared for the (non-hard-core) frissons that Oshima has conjured up—the landscape splendors that surround Gisaburo's lonely rickshaw journeys; the firelit Utamaro-like intensity of the lovers' faces as they suck and fuck themselves into a tragic ecstasy that is stunningly out-of-sync with the lowly medieval surroundings; the scary proletarian insistency of the ghost as he takes Seki (movingly portrayed by Kazuko Yoshiyuki) and Toyoji on misty rickshaw-voyages into a dream landscape, a place where both guilt and instinct reach their apogee and from which it is so difficult and hazardous to return... After the screening, I notice Oshima's editor, Keiichi Uraoka, lugging the heavy film cans out of the projection booth. I impulsively rush over and unburden Uraoka of most of the cans, which we begin to load into Dauman's car. Oshima, who has been discussing with Dauman (in the expressive pidgin English they use to communicate) some problem concerning the editing-in of the titles, sees me struggling with the cans and runs over to help. Then he startles me by pressing my hand. A sad, poignant smile on his face, he says: "You shouldn't do this, John. It's very nice of you..." The emotion vanishes from his face as quickly as it came, and he returns to the discussion with Dauman. This flickering display of emotion seems to sum up the profundity of Oshima's art—the trembling awareness of the flame of human feeling, the tender vibrancy that calls into question the gamut of repressions and hostilities that enslave the "true voice of feeling"...

Jan. 9. I am in a café near the Bastille, a teeming section of Paris to which I frequently repair—the super-burgeois elegance of the Place Victor Hugo area has begun to stifle me. I suddenly become aware that the café is empty, and that the streets outside are deserted. Then I'm startled as a huge wave breaks through the window of the café. As the mass of water is about to engulf me I wake up... The phone in the "new house" begins to ring—Maryse is calling, it is a sunbright Monday morning, and her sweetly gruff voice asks "why have you not come for breakfast with Anatole?" Over breakfast Dauman tells me that he has been up all night searching for a new title for the film, and that it finally came to him at 6 A.M. The film will now be called *Empire of Passion.* Dauman watches for my reaction, then disappears to telephone Oshima. He returns: "Oshima likes the title very much. He says that the title is good because it shows that *L'Empire des sens* and *L'Empire de la passion* form a

kind of diptych..." Later on, a huge roundtable dinner at Dauman's favorite restaurant, Le Séoul, a softly-lit and exquisitely ornamented Korean gourmet paradise not for from Etoile. Oshima is there with most of his crew—Uraoka, Takemitsu (the brilliant modernist-classicist composer who's creating an eerie score for *Empire of Passion*), the cinematographer Yoshio Miyajima (a wise, earthy man who keeps filling everyone's glass with sake) and the high-strung Shibata, Oshima's production supervisor and interpreter. There are also Dauman, several fashionable French ladies, and Jean-Paul Sarré (an eclectic Lacanian psychoanalyst who writes for *Le Quotidien*). Over the *sashimi* I tell Oshima that the sexual politics of his recent films seem to me an important corrective to the

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Gerald Peary

WOMAN IN PORN

How young Roberta Findlay grew up and made **Snuff**

Several years ago a male American film critic offered a more-than-abstruse Lacanian reading of Roberta Findlay's pornographic *Angel Number 9* at an international conference on psychoanalysis in Italy. He concluded his paper quite ingeniously by claiming that this movie was made by a man, that the director's name "Roberta Findlay" was an obvious pseudonym.

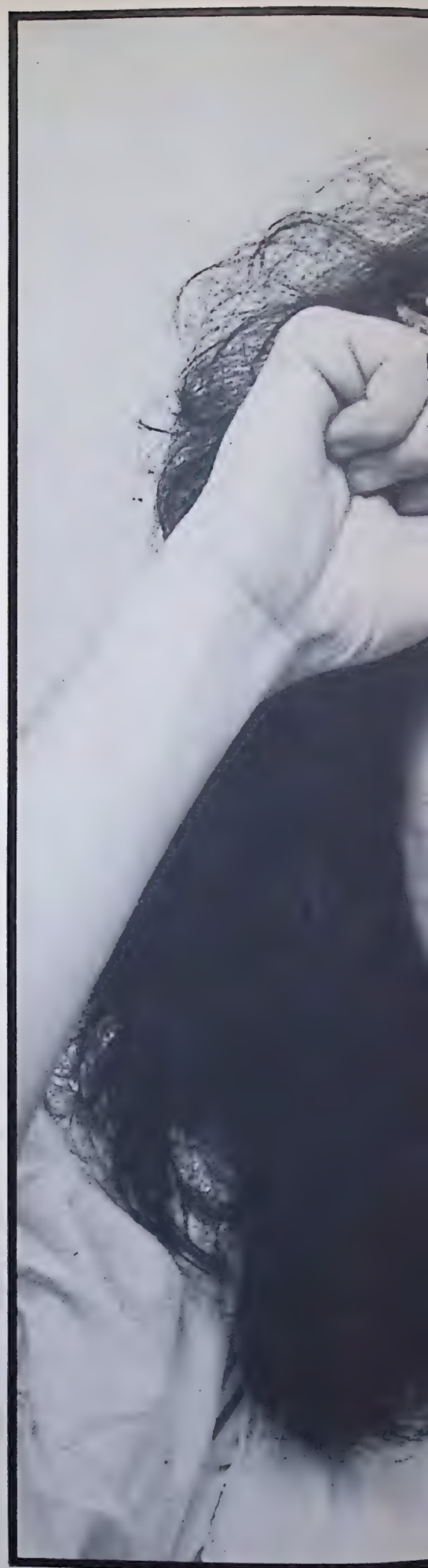
Ingenious yes, but dead wrong. Roberta Findlay is alive and well in New York City; and she is a female all right, the only woman who directs XXX-rated movies. Interestingly, she often directs under a *man's* name, Norman Roberts and Robert Norman being two of her favorite noms de plume. But does the signature remain a woman's? Molly Haskell also saw *Angel Number 9* and found it conclusively woman-directed: "...the most unusual occurence ... is not the plot device of having a man come to earth as a woman to discover 'what suffering really is' ... It's the fact that two women greet their lovers with the unwelcome news that they are pregnant ... (P)regnancy is a no-no in sexploitation movies, a definite downer to Don Juan fantasies of quickie, no-fault sex." ("Are Women Directors Different?" *The Village Voice,* February 3, 1975).

Getting to reclusive Roberta Findlay is no easy task. A series of telephone messages from this interviewer went unheeded, partly because Findlay craves anonymity and partly because her tape machine was waterlogged from being under dripping plants in her Eighth Avenue apartment. Finally I caught her at work and, after long conversations about Joan Crawford movies established our empathy, she agreed to talk and offer her first real career interview. We met for five very friendly hours and then tried to see *Saturday Night Fever.* It was sold out.

Findlay is a feverish cinema fan who learned about old movies while a student at City College of New York in the 1960s. There she met and married Michael Findlay, and they attended weekly coterie screenings of the Theodore Huff Film Society, named in honor of the late author of a classic study of Charles Chaplin. The Huff Society, a still-flourishing New York phenomenon, is a famous haven for the most extreme and zealous movie freaks, those who know the actors credits (*every* actor, including literally all bit parts and walk-ons) for tens of thousands of Hollywood films, and especially "B" pictures of the 1930s and 1940s.

Roberta Findlay fell into porn by following after her enterprising husband Michael as his "movie girl." As she explained to me (in a conversation which came out blank on my trusty tape recorder), when Michael started out in the late 1960s directing soft-core films, Roberta insisted on starring in the first picture herself for fear he would succumb to his leading ladies. She was featured, for instance, in *Hold Me When I'm Naked,* filmed on the beach at Gloucester, Massachusetts.

When they moved to "hard X," Roberta Findlay became "cameraman" [sic] under Michael's direction. Their first pornos in the early 1970s were pseudo-documentaries, as a way of avoiding arrest on obscenity charges. A "doctor" or "psychiatrist" would talk into the camera about sex counselling and then the film would cut to "educational" footage of supposed encounter groups, or to illustrations, *Joy of Sex* fashion, of Kama Sutra positions. When it became clear that the films would not be busted, that pornography was here to stay, the Findlays dropped the



Photographs by Cori Wells Braun

Gerald Peary is a coeditor of Women and the Cinema *and* The Classic American Novel and the Movies.

documentary guise and went to straight "fuck-suck" hardcore. Along the way, they went to Argentina and made *Snuff,* the most infamous of all pornographic films. Roberta Findlay discusses *Snuff* for the first time ever below.

Incredibly shy and insecure, Findlay spends six workaholic days and nights a week shooting and editing film, then returns to her New York apartment to play her baby grand piano or sink into thick volumes by her favorite novelists, John O'Hara, Theodore Dreiser and the Victorians. She has no friends and no family. (She has *never* had a female friend, which may help explain some of her suspicious attitudes toward the women's movement.)

As for Michael Findlay, the maker of *Snuff* ended up dead in a way more terrible than anything concocted in the movie. He was killed atop the Pan Am building in New York a year or so ago, decapitated in an eerie helicopter accident which made newspaper headlines across America. He was waiting to board the helicopter shuttle, on the way to JFK airport and then to Europe to demonstrate his grand invention: a portable 3-D camera set to revolutionize the filmmaking world. It too proved a victim to the fierce propeller.

I'll start the easiest way. How did you get interested in movies?

I was in school and I was playing the piano and I was a music major at City College (CCNY) and the Manhattan School of Music simultaneously. I knew that I was never going to be a concert pianist like all the kids were supposed to be according to their parents. I wasn't good enough and I said, "Oh dear, I have to do something or else I'll have to work all the time." I said, "What am I going to do?" So Michael Findlay came along and he told me that he was interested in films. And that is all he wanted to do ever in his whole life. And I said, "Gee, that sounds much easier than being a concert pianist." So, I left school and we started making movies together. And that's how it started.

You got into film when you were eighteen years old?

Seventeen. I was seventeen when I met Michael. We lived together. I shouldn't say that on tape! At that time it was a great sin. Then we got married. So, Michael started taking me to The Theodore Huff Society, where we watched old movies. I thought this was so interesting because I was in love with Michael and I felt that anything he did was fabulous and spectacular. Most of the stuff that we saw was, well, wacko. A kind word for it was "very esoteric." And there would be specialized discussions. I didn't know what anyone was talking about. And Michael, who I thought had known a *lot* about films, was really left out in the cold. He didn't know what they were talking about either.

Before the introduction to film at The Huff, I guess I just went to films like all kids, except less, probably. I didn't have any friends, so I had trouble getting to the movies. Any of the films I saw were on television, until I went to CCNY and met

Michael. He was running a film society. He was much more artistic in his choice of films than the Huff guys. He was interested in European silent films, and he added scores for the silent films, which he showed in the library every Tuesday and Thursday. So we went and recorded a whole bunch of piano scores for all these films. Michael threw in *Intolerence* just for the hell of it and I did a score for that based on *Pictures at an Exhibition.*

You wrote the original music?

No, I can't play by ear or pick anything up. It was just a conglomeration of pieces with bridges that seemed appropriate.

Did you play piano accompaniment?

I did that once. Michael had a film festival running in a coffee shop down in the Village. And I was so nervous, it was terrible. I drank a pint of vodka during the whole thing. It was *The Kiss* with Greta Garbo and I threw up as the film was ending, all over the floor. Very embarrassing.

What are your favourite films?

I love *The Crowd.* The most depressing film I've ever seen. And every time I've seen it, I want to die. King Vidor. *The Passion of Joan of Arc.* That is really an exciting film. *The Thief of Bagdad. One Night in Paradise.* I love *Greed.* I love *I Married A Witch.* Let me see, what else? *Touch of Evil* is one of my favorites. Very secular favorites.

So... when did you realize that you would like to direct movies?

It's a long, involved personal story. About five years ago, I left Michael. I don't know why but I just left. I don't know why to this day. And I started making films myself. I went to a film distributor and said, "I can make you a film really cheap, and I'll make you a lot of money." I had never done this before. I'd worked with Michael in the beginning as nothing. As a Film Girl. Sort of trailing around in back of him and I didn't know anything. And then I became his cameraman. Not that he wanted me to. He would have been much happier if I had gone off and done something else on my own. But I badgered him and bothered him and he finally agreed. He said, "Oh well. We might as well do these things together." Michael would tell me where to hold the camera. He didn't know too much technically about making films. Or about lighting.

[*Shades of Watergate. There is a twenty-minute gap in the tape here, concerning the Findlays' pioneering sojourn into the porn field. Roberta Findlay's remembrance of these Horatio Alger days is paraphrased in the Introduction.*]

Did Michael's partner's parents know what their house was being used for?

No. They knew that it was some kind of work that the three of us had to do in the house.

Was there evidence on the sheets?

No. We didn't screw in the bedroom. We screwed on the floor and on the couch.

The parents' couch?

Yeah. Isn't that terrible? A nice Jewish house! And in the bathtub. We all screwed in the bathtub. I don't know. That was a two-day shooting. These are old films; they are not played around too much. In fact, they aren't films. They're just screwing. They're very boring.

You would make the films and then sell them outright to the distributor?

Well, the price kept going down. I think we got ten thousand dollars for the first one. We doubled our own money, more or less. Maybe we made even more because the budget wasn't even as high as five thousand dollars. But the last one we made lost money. It cost us about thirty-five hundred dollars. I do remember that figure. We had out-takes from other pictures in it too. Yet we sold it for only twenty-eight fifty. So, Michael said, "Oh! Something is wrong." Twenty-eight hundred dollars. So that was the end of that.

How long did these films take to cut?

About two weeks.

So it was really a killing when you made five thousand dollars.

Yeah. It was a biggie. So we tried to make a whole bunch of them. But the price went rapidly down because the pictures were awfully terrible. And there were other people doing the same too. I *believe* that's true. I was just a little kid, being protected by Michael all the time. We'd go out and shoot and I thought it was great fun. Not shooting these people screwing because I've never liked that. In the beginning, it was disgusting. I just found it repulsive to look at these people's things through the camera. And then, after a while, it was just very boring. I was like machinery.

Then we went to Argentina. We all went to Argentina to make *Snuff,* which was about five years ago.

Have you ever told the story of the making of Snuff?

No. At the time of its release, people were trying to find out about the picture and they discovered that I had shot it and Michael had directed it. But I refused to talk because there was a disagreement we had with the distributor of the film, and I didn't want to aid him with royalties.

There wasn't much to tell. We were in Argentina and we had all these investors. Michael and his partner had talked these guys into putting up about thirty-five thousand dollars and making a film in an exotic place. They thought and thought of an exotic place and picked Argentina. I always wanted to go to Argentina. So, we did and shot for four weeks, except it was what we could have shot here in about twelve days.

Did you know it was going to be called Snuff?

No. No.

What was the planning before this movie?

Michael wrote this terrible script; it was really awful. It made no sense. And Michael thought that in order to interest these investors we'd have to offer them something different and special. We'd tell them that we'd go to Argentina and get triple or quadruple our money's worth because everything was so cheap there for what they were investing. And that was true. Actors were much cheaper. An assistant cameraman made about fifty dollars a week.

Did they read the script?

Yeah. They thought that it was pretty good. It lost something maybe in translation. It was about Charles Manson. Michael, being one of those Upper West Side liberals added all these political implications, because in Argentina, there are these German Nazis living there.

What was the politics?

It was very confused. In the end, it came out that Manson was a sympathetic figure. He killed off the German family. That was the big political statement. And this Charles Manson character makes a speech about killing all these German people. And he asks if that isn't the same thing as the Israelis supplying guns to the Arabs. Now, I never understood what that meant.

What was the element in the movie that made it appealing to the investors?

The violence and the exotic locations. We rented a mansion and shot there for a week. And the star of the movie. The production manager got us this girl who had been Miss World of 1969 or 1970 or something. 1971. Whatever. So that, with the star and the violence in the script and my camera work, the investors thought it was a good idea. They thought, "How can we lose?"

What was the reception when you came back with the film from Argentina?

Nobody wanted it because it was awful. We took it to California and we almost got a sale but we took it to the MPAA and they said, "This is disgusting." There was too much violence, and you couldn't be making films about Charles Manson that were favorable to him. The picture just didn't go anywhere. It just sat around until the distributor read about these "snuff" things in South America. He said, "Oh, what a good idea I have. I'll call it *Snuff* and release it and pretend that it is one of those pictures shot in South America about actually killing people." And he added one scene in the end. I never saw it when he released it.

I don't know anyone who actually saw the film either. From what I understand, the last scene of Snuff *allegedly showed an actress literally murdered before the camera. Fortunately, the scene was a hoax. An animal was substituted.*

I heard that there was a donkey being cut up and chopped up, which is nothing that we did in the film. So, that's how *Snuff* got released. It was just a fake.

Did you profit from Snuff?

I made nothing. I didn't even get paid for the shooting. Michael made around $1500 to get paid off. The distributor didn't pay anybody anything.

Did you follow the Snuff *controversy? When the theatres were picketed by feminist groups because the film advocated murdering women—the ultimate message of pornography?*

Yeah, sort of. I must say that I became popular when it was discovered that Michael and I had made the film. *Variety* called me and *Show Business* called me and asked for interviews. *Variety* claimed I said, "I close my eyes and I didn't see anything." If they asked me what I thought of the movie I probably said, "I don't know. I don't

"In the beginning, it was disgusting. I just found it repulsive to look at these people's things through the camera."

know." Being a cameraman, why should I? Then I started getting phone calls from a group of ladies, when *Snuff* was playing on Broadway. Then I got scared. Most of the people who objected seemed to be the liberation feminist people. This one girl. Girl? Person. This one woman kept calling me. Her name was Jo, she said. She told me, "I understand that you shot this picture. What are you going to do about it?" I said, "I'm not going to do anything about it." And she said, "It's your duty and your obligation to the sisterhood to protest with us in front of the theater." I said, "I can't do that. I haven't seen the film." And she said, "I'll meet you tomorrow downtown and we'll go see it together and then you can sign whatever it is and then we can protest this thing together." And I said, "Okay. I'll go to the picture. How will I know you?" And she said, "Oh, you'll know me." She had a very deep voice. She said, "I'm six foot two and I'll be wearing a trenchcoat." So I said, "Oh, I see." That was the end of that. I had made an appointment to see the fucking film and I never showed up. The last I heard, she and this group of women went to this distributor's office with the intention of beating him up. He locked his door and called the police and they carted away all these women.

They, in effect, publicized the film. The picture made money in New York because of those women's groups marching up and down in front of the theater. I mentioned this to the woman. She said, "Well, something has to be done to stop this outrageous attack on women." I didn't care one way or the other, actually, I don't have any interest in women's lib. So, that was the end of the *Snuff* story.

And after that?

And then I left Michael. That was the end of our careers together.

What year was this?

Five years ago. I don't remember exactly. Then I went to the same distributor who had turned down *Snuff* originally and I said, "Hey, I'll make a film for you." And he gave me five thousand dollars for starters. And I made *The Altar of Lust.* It was a hard-core feature with a very slim script and no sync sound. I was the producer and the director and the cameraman and the editor. It was the first picture I had ever done all by myself. I don't know what possessed me. I had nobody to turn to. Then I wrote another script, produced and directed it, and cut it. Again, it wasn't much. It was just a stupid series of loops, later retitled *The Doctor Knows Best.*

Did you direct when you were a cameraman with Michael?

Oh sure. I left that part out. I beg your pardon. We made a film in Belgium a couple of years into the Michael thing. I studied French in high school and in college. Michael was beginning French. So, we decided that I would have to direct the film. So he shot it and I wrote the script. That was called *Erotikon.* That was an interesting case, actually. That was a real script. It wasn't a series of loops. It was an R-rated picture because in Belgium they didn't screw in movies at that time. It was about a man who shoots himself in the beginning of the film and the gun misfires as he is killing himself. He shoots himself in the stomach and he spends the whole film dying on the floor. That's eighty-five minutes. At the end of the film, he dies.

Anyway, it is a series of aural impressions (he hears his daughter in the next room with her boyfriend, he hears churchbells, and stuff) that send him off into memories of things that have happened in his life.

This was your script?

Yeah. But it was just a series of impressions. We utilized these pictures from a book of ancient obscene Greek paintings. He keeps finding this book all over the place with all of these drawings. He is frightened of being homosexual and he keeps being approached and backing off.

Anyway, that was my first cutting job too. That was fun. We had a 16mm viewer made up to 35mm, and I cut most of it in Holland under Michael's supervision. So, the picture was finished in Europe and we mixed it in Belgium. We brought the film back into the country, whereupon it was seized by Customs. There was a big court case for this blue picture *Erotikon,* and they objected to the drawings, which were legitimate works of art. A very expensive court case went on and the distributor won. Can you imagine it?

Maybe that's where I've heard of it.

And we won and the distributor said, "Oh look. Now we'll be famous." But he never released the film.

That sounds like a film to see.

I'd like to see it again too. But God knows where it is. It's a very strange picture. Bela Bartok on the soundtrack.

Is that the first time you cared in some sense about what the pictures were about?

Yeah. The first time. It was my own film and I was very proud of that picture. But nobody understood it.

Does it have a theme that you can say in a sentence?

It didn't have any theme, unfortunately. The most I can say is that a man killed himself, and we didn't want to really get fancy about it.

Does he have heterosexual experiences?

Yeah, but they are very bizarre. The first one he has is with a female impersonator whom he picked up in Belgium. She worked as a stripper; we met her at her own dingy club in Brussels. She appeared in a gold lamé gown and she was very thin, like an ostrich. Her stage name was Laya Deluxe and her real name was Leon. So that's his first experience.

I shot it with ultra-wide lens so that she even looked uglier. He was a very short man, the man we hired for the film, and he was crawling all over this very tall creature. He wasn't sure if it was even a man or a woman. It wasn't even a sex scene. He just kept crawling around on the floor looking for a woman and there's this thing lying in bed. So, that's the end of that sequence.

He marries a beautiful girl during the film, but she dies. All his experiences are unhappy. He wanted to be with men but he wasn't allowed. So he kills himself. What more could anyone do?

Who was the intended audience for this picture?

That's what the distributor asked. I said "Obviously, it is an art film. Just open it in art houses." He said, "I have the choice of either letting customs have the negative and destroying it or fighting the case." And I said, "You can't let them destroy my negative." He decided to fight it. His lawyer saw *Erotikon* and said that he couldn't understand it but that it looked very important. After he won, he couldn't figure out how to distribute it.

I'd love to see it. Will you promise that you'll try to find it?

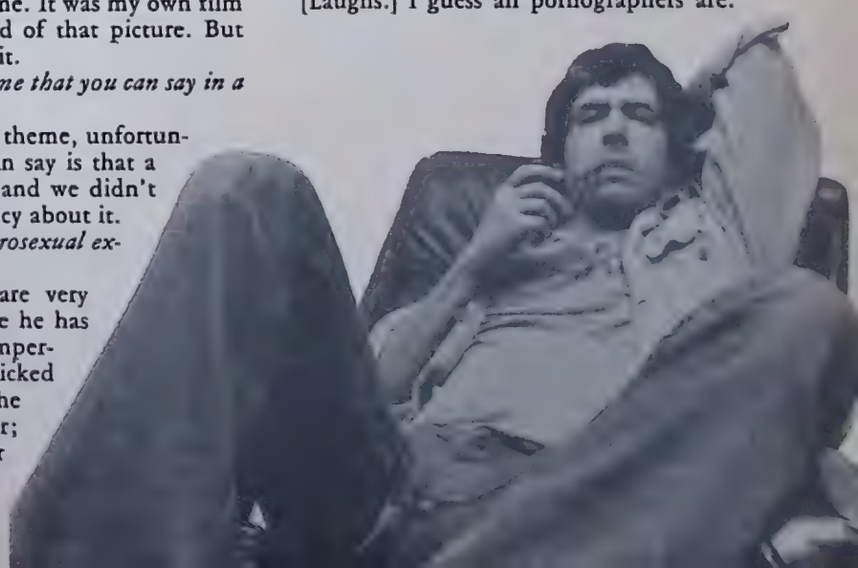
Oh yes I will. I hadn't thought of it in years.

Anyway, I made this thing called *Rosebud* and that made a lot of money for the distributor. I think I got four thousand dollars for making the film.

The film opens with Rosebud; the girl's name is Rosebud; she's dead. And it opens with a tape recording of why she killed herself. So, through the entire picture it keeps cutting back to the tape recorder so we don't have to have an excuse for narration. I hate narration. She left the tape to her father. I thought that was cute.

It seems that there is a kind of porn genre about people on the edge of death.

[Laughs.] I guess all pornographers are.



Jamie Gillis, one of Findlay's stars.

"I hire actors who will screw as opposed to screwers who I try to make act, which is impossible."

That's what one thinks about when one shoots dirty pictures: death. Right. Sex and death. Anyway, we did that one and that was very successful and I got even more money for the next one, which was a real goodie. It was called *Teenage Milkmaids.* It was a silly picture about a girl who lives on a farm with her old, bible-reading, fatuous father. And he winds up having a stroke and she ends up pregnant and having to take care of him. She meets the travelling salesman. It's sort of a parody of Warner Brothers. I don't know what it meant. Then I made another one after that called *The Clamdigger's Daughter,* which was just like *Teenage Milkmaids* except her father was a clamdigger. He drank instead of reading the Bible. All these pictures have mean, crazy, or drunk fathers in them. This was a two week shooting. In *The Clamdigger's Daughter,* the father sabotages a ship with his daughter and her lover on it and that's the end of the film. It was very exciting.

How did you film a sinking ship?

Not very well. What I did was I shot a love scene below deck and I started filling a fish tank with water in front of the camera while they were making love so that it looked like the cabin was filling up with water. I forgot to light the water. So you see this black mess come up. It looked like black primordial ooze, slopping up to the top of the tank until it blacked out the picture. Then we cut back to the ocean. They are not there. The fishing boat is gone. It was not a successful film, and the distributor couldn't release it. It was soft-core, practically.

Then I made *Angel Number 9.* That was pretty good. I didn't mind that one. It was based on *Goodbye, Charlie.* You know the film with Debbie Reynolds? It's about a man who's been killed and comes back to earth as a woman. We shot in heaven. We built heaven on 45th Street.

Molly Haskell reviewed Angel Number 9 *in the* Village Voice. *And a scholarly article on the movie, a psychoanalytical reading appeared in* The Velvet Light Trap.

This time the distributor decided that it was time to declare that a *woman* was making "erotic" films. Not pornography. He hired two publicity guys to do whatever they do and I was on radio shows and in magazines and he was going to try television but I refused. Some stupid talk show, Joe Franklin or somebody. I just couldn't do that. Joe Franklin is such a nerd. And so on the marquee, it opened at the Lincoln Art Theatre in New York, it said "Roberta Findlay's *Angel Number 9.*" And we thought it would make money.

Have any of your pictures played in a women's film festival?

No, no. I never tried it. I defy anybody to think that they are made by a woman. The only reason I make these pictures is because I'm not talented enough to be a concert pianist and it's the only way I know of at this time to make films. It's the *only* reason.

Intermixed I shot a number of other pictures for a number of other people. I shot things for the New York City government. I shot a documentary film one summer for the News Services Agency, and it was on WNET in New York. It was an hour long documentary for kids.

Why do you hate making pornography?

There's a whole series of reasons. Mostly because they are X-rated pictures. It is a whole snowballing thing. We can't spend very much money, nobody can. You can't have a large budget on the thing because the market is so limited. If you have a small budget, that brings in all kinds of horrible things. It brings in bad scripts, it brings in technically bad equipment. I just can't make a good film for twenty or thirty thousand dollars. The money's gone even before I turn around. Especially now, everything's gotten so expensive. The second thing is the actors. I'm sorry to say this but the actors are dreadful. They can't get anywhere in the world, so they go into pornography. I try to stay away, now at least, from bodies. I hire actors who will screw as opposed to screwers who I try to make act, which is impossible.

I have tried over and over and over to make one erotic scene. Not even erotic, but to make it even sexually realistic. There was only one scene in *Angel Number 9,* the blow job scene, that was actually powerful, I think. I just let the camera run and I never cut or anything. Jamie Gillis played a bastard. The girl was madly in love with him and he just accosts her and abuses her. It's one shot. A four minute shot with him.

But how do you feel about the fact that this scene humiliates the woman?

Women's groups protested this one scene because it looks real. It actually does. He's just abusing her. Slaps her around, hits her with his belt. Not hard, he just does it. And she's blowing him, and she is happy to do it because she is so madly in love with him. At the end of the scene, he comes and he throws her out of the room. It took about half a day to shoot. I spent a lot of time talking with Jamie about it.

So you discussed his motivation?

Yeah, I try to make a reason for everybody screwing. But that doesn't mean that's the way it's going to look on film because the people don't screw very well and their acting isn't very good, so you get nothing. Which is another thing wrong. Pornographic films are like an opera. It's true. You have the opera story, but then everything stops when the soprano has to sing an aria. It's the same thing in sex films. The story goes on, then it stops, then they have to screw. The script has stopped. Whatever the script might be.

Your genre analysis is excellent.

Sorry to compare pornography to opera. I really think more of opera than that. So, it just stops any script dead. It really does. Because, another thing that fails is if I want to continue the script development within the sex scene. I've tried so many times. Actors can't talk and screw at the same time.

Have you made anything lately which is more interesting?

The thing we shot in October, I was the cameraman on; a big fancy picture and they hope to get an "R" rating. Well, we'll see. If they do, it will be a breakthrough in the MPAA. It's about "civilians," we call them, sexual fantasies. That is, people like you. Well, more normal than you. Just regular people off the street and their sexual fantasies, which are re-enacted in this mansion in New Jersey. They interviewed hundreds of people and we shot about fifty interviews and then they selected about thirty people to shoot. And we shot these people's fantasies. All of them were in their own fantasies and they used a cast that I assembled out of our stable of porno actors. They were used as props. I've seen it twice. Ralph Rosenblum cut it. He's the editor of all the Woody Allen pictures and *A Thousand Clowns* and *The Pawnbroker.* He edited the film. He's also one of the directors. We shot ninety thousand feet of film between two cameras.

Is this the first time you shot with two cameras?

Oh no. I always shoot with two cameras. Sometimes three. *Sweet Pumpkin* was a three camera film. I used three cameras for the cum sequence. It's three guys. Dear, dear, dear. They just kept coming and coming and coming because I kept switching from one camera to the other. And it looked like they were all doing it simultaneously.

Is this an "R" rated film now?

It will get an "R" rating. Because of Ralph Rosenblum, it will get an "R" rating. He can't afford an "X" rating.

I also shot a musical in November. I had to go to Hollywood, white tie and tails. It's a remake of *The Goldiggers of 1933.* We shot elaborate musical numbers on a stage on 84th Street. Wind machines blowing diaphanous gowns. It was wonderful. I was the photographer. A very pretty picture. I like to make all kinds of films.

Don't you care about the subject matter? I mean really, deep down, you don't care about the morality of your films?

I'm sorry. No. Isn't that terrible? One of my favorite films is by Leni Riefenstahl. That is *Triumph of the Will.* I thought it was a great film. I did.

A film like that led to people being put in the ovens.

It's terrible. My parents were Jewish, making me Jewish. I should put some more depth to this thing, shouldn't I? So shallow.

Cecile Starr

Trends

Report on the American Film Festival / 78

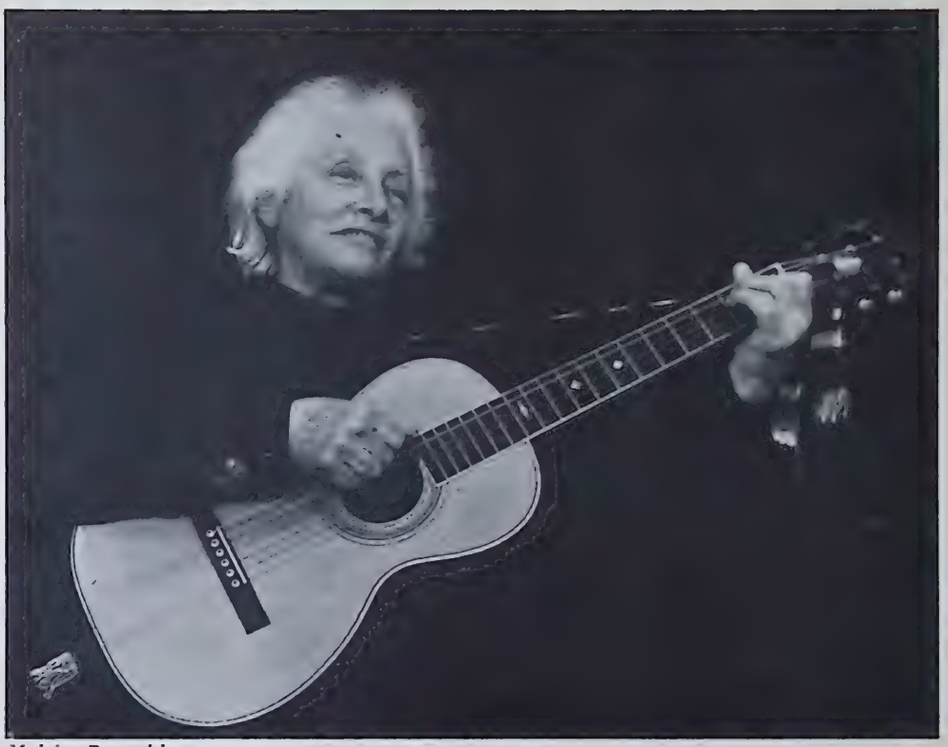
Nearly two thousand film librarians, teachers, filmmakers and distributors gathered at the 20th American Film Festival in New York, to meet and talk and screen 16mm film in a frantic five-day marathon. Some 350 films were shown (out of a record-breaking 1,045 entries), and more than 100 awards were handed out in over 50 categories. Sales of winners should be high.

Hardware Wars won this year's top award (Blue Ribbon) in the Humor & Satire category, and will undoubtedly be purchased by a number of libraries—not so much for its excellence in that category as for its almost certain appeal to children. *Woody Allen: An American Comedy,* which won second place (Red Ribbon) in Cinema and Television, will be widely purchased because of Woody's popularity. *Love It Like a Fool: A Film About Malvina Reynolds,* which copped both the Blue Ribbon in Performing Arts: Music / Circus and the John Grierson Award for best social documentary by a new filmmaker, will reach audiences interested in women's films, senior citizens, political activism and music.

Women filmmakers have been increasingly represented among AFF winners in recent years, in approximate proportion to their number of entries. Twenty years ago one film in twenty was made by a woman; now it's one in three or four. Blue Ribbon awards went this year to Nancy Baer's *Alice Neel, Collector of Souls,* Heather Cook's *Newborn,* Helena Solberg Ladd's *Simplamente Jenny,* and Frances Reid / Elizabeth Stevens / Cathy Zheurlin's *In the Best Interests of the Children.* Among Red Ribbon winners were Susan Fanshel / Jill Godmilow's *Louise Nevelson in Process,* Linda Feferman's *Elizabeth Swados: The Girl with the Incredible Feeling,* Joan Micklin Silver's *Bernice Bobs Her Hair,* Susan Heick's *The Nurse Practitioner,* Susan Sussman's *Eugenie,* Perry Miller Adato's *Georgia O'Keeffe,* and Debra Franco's *A Wedding in the Family.* Cinda Firestone won two Red Ribbons for *South Beach* and *Mountain People.*

Women were also represented in winning teams: Charlotte Zwerlin, who collaborated with David and Albert Maysles on *Running Fence;* Maxi Cohen, who co-directed *Joe and Maxi* with Joel Gold; Anne Drew, who worked with Robert Drew on *Kathy's Dance;* Ginny Durrin, who made *Hard Work* with Kip Durrin. Not all these films deal primarily with women, but most do—from teenage rape victims to lesbian mothers.

Newcomer Susan Wengraf, winner of this year's John Grierson Award (which now has gone to women in four out of eight awards), began as a New York still photographer and teacher of deaf children. In 1970 she moved to the West Coast where she worked with Linda Artel on a book about non-sexist 16mm films. She felt most of these films weren't very good, and particularly noted the lack of films about older women (she had just turned thirty herself). When she met Malvina Reynolds in July 1974, Wengraf felt the folksinger would make a strong subject for a film and an excellent role model. Unable to raise production money through grants, she returned to full-time teaching and put her earnings into the film, which she worked on nights and weekends. Charles Rudnick and David Dobkin worked with her as co-producers and did the sound and cinematography. Pete Seeger, who appears in one sequence, gave a benefit recital to help raise money for the completion of the film, but there still remain an estimated $10,000 in debts and deferments to be paid.



Malvina Reynolds

Wengraf and her collaborators have set up their own self-distribution company, Red Hen Films, and they expect to handle the film on this personal basis for the time being, even though several 16mm distributors expressed interest in handling it. This is another 1970s trend. Sixteen millimeter distribution now ranges far beyond the five or six big companies, and twenty or thirty smaller ones.

Another trend that deserves comment is the staggering price rises for sales and rentals. *Young Dr. Freud,* a 99-minute, black-and-white film made for Austrian television and winner of the Emily Award for highest numerical score in the competition, costs a whopping $695 to purchase and $75 to rent. Some viewers at the Festival felt that the top award should have gone to John Korty's *Who Are the DeBolts?,* a 72-minute color film that sells for $900 and rents for $100. More than eighty other films shown at the American Film Festival sell or lease for over $400. Two 90-minute color films, both politically oriented, reach the outer limits for sales prices this year: *The CIA's Secret Army,* available for purchase at $1250, and *Hollywood on Trial,* available for a 5-year lease for $1800.

The films are costly not only because of runaway inflation, but also because television has set the pattern for longer running times, and has made color a virtual imperative even for films whose subjects in no way benefit from it. These skyrocketing costs present a real dilemma to film librarians with dwindling budgets (partly due to investments in expensive Hollywood prints and foreign entertainment features), and in the long run could be the undoing of

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Michael Wilson

During the school year, 1970-71, I came to Los Angeles to complete research for a doctoral dissertation on American political films. I was bristling with rhetoric, like "revisionist instruments" and "co-opted messages," and fascinated by the paradox of financiers financing and distributors distributing self-destructive documents like *Getting Straight* and *The Molly Maguires*. Michael Wilson, recuperating from an operation and a subsequent stroke, gently disabused me of some of my crude notions.

When I returned to graduate school in New Haven, I taught a semester's course in film criticism. I assigned my students Joris Ivens' autobiography, *The Camera and I*, and Jon Halliday's *Sirk on Sirk*. Both filmmakers were remarkably candid about compromises made in their careers. Wilson's reminiscences one morning I visited him in Ojai California were like that, too.

I wonder if his being a screenwriter with a Marxist point of view and a clear perspective of what was possible and what was expected accounts for the preponderance of "neither-saint-nor-sinner" protagonists in his films.

He told me, "You always stood the chance or danger that if you remained too stubborn in your position on the content of what you'd written that they would simply terminate your services and hire another writer. Hence if you felt that in the main the picture on which you were working was a good one and the subject which you had treated you had done honestly, you might from time to time compromise a bit here and there simply to prevent another man's coming on and changing it altogether.

"Even in the case of *A Place in the Sun* where my relations with George Stevens were very good, by and large, eventually we came into conflict on ideological points. Sometimes I would give way or be won over to his point of view. In other cases I would stick to my guns and the situation would get nasty. At about the moment he began to shoot the picture, he did bring on another writer, Harry Brown. Although there is very little of Brown's work in that picture, Stevens brought him on, because he felt I was perhaps too stubbornly Marxist in my outlook.

"He was afraid the picture would be attacked as being a left-wing picture, that it would be picketed by the American Legion, or that the studio itself would lose its nerve and fail to back him up. That didn't happen. The picture was very well received and was an enormous success. This was, as you know, at the height of the McCarthy period. As a matter of fact, I was blacklisted about the same month the picture came out...

"I tend to feel that the didactic or agit-prop approach to the whole art form is an incorrect one for progressives, with occasional exceptions. If the aim is primarily to change people, the film artist or creator is better off simply depicting honestly the way things are rather than beating people over the head with his own point of view in a propagandistic way.

"I immediately have to qualify that by saying there are notable exceptions, one of which is *Salt of the Earth,* which is obviously tendentious, was designed to be, is very class conscious, and makes no attempt to disguise its Marxist point of view.

"Perhaps I am mistaken even about my own work. Perhaps *Salt of the Earth* would have been a better picture had it been less tendentious...

"With the sole exception of *Salt of the Earth,* the others (of my pictures) were made and distributed by major studios in this country and, therefore, at best could only be defined as humanist pictures, which shed some light on the nature of the world we live in. That was the most I really attempted. I think that's true of *A Place in the Sun,* which I find in general an honest and illuminating statement of the American scene. I think *Friendly Persuasion* is a humanist statement on war, although I find nothing particularly profound in it.

"One of mine, which I find to be most explicit on this, is *The Bridge on the River Kwai,* to my mind a more trenchant anti-war statement than, say, *Friendly Persuasion,* which is pacifist-oriented. What *The Bridge on the River Kwai* says, or, at least, what I intended to say, is that the military mentality, if it's allowed to take power, becomes completely irrational...

"Now to the subject of *Che!*. I undertook this whole project with grave misgivings, because I was not a naïve kid any more. I should have known better than just to think that one could do an honest picture about Guevara in a stronghold like 20th Century-Fox. But I was persuaded by a number of my close friends to give it a try, because times were changing. Zanuck wanted to make this picture, because he knew that this man, Guevara, had captured the imagination of the young people of the world, and I lit upon a device I thought could make an honest picture out of it. I stand by the screenplay that I wrote as one in which I take considerable pride.

"The device that I am referring to is that the characters in the picture appear in two guises. They appear in the past during Guevara's life as participants in the story and in the present as witnesses, both those who loved him and those who hated him. So the structure of my screenplay was such that it was a constant debate about what kind of man he was, with witnesses appearing to say he was a saint, a Marxist saint, and others saying he was a monster. And this device in my screenplay actually worked, because, without forcing the studio or the director or anyone to take a position on the man, it revealed through those who loved him or those who hated him a great deal more than you could do even in a tendentious picture. The day they began shooting the picture I was informed my services were terminated."

Wilson asked to have his name removed, reconsidered when his advice was sought on reediting the completed film, then allowed his name to be restored to the credits. His recommendations were not heeded.

"My name was back on something for which I am completely ashamed and humiliated, wondering what my friends around the world think how Mike could write such trash."

Wilson's screen credits also include (among others) *The Men in Her Life, It's a Wonderful Life, Five Fingers, Five Branded Women, Lawrence of Arabia, The Sandpiper,* and *Planet of the Apes*. (Some of those are co-writer credits.)

At the time of my visit he was not sanguine about the prospects for his new screenplay about a young doctor, a Vietnam veteran, who settles in Isla Vista, hoping to become rich but becoming the cherished adviser of anti-war activists and draft dodgers instead.

Wilson died March 12, 1978. He was only 63.

Mitch Tuchman

Courtenay Wyche Beinhorn

POLA NEGRI

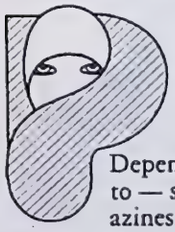
Tempestuous Temptress

Most contemporary moviegoers have never heard of Pola Negri. Some might remember her cameo appearance as the exotic Madame Habib, an aging jewel collector, in *The Moonspinners,* a Walt Disney production.

Few viewers of that film, however, could possibly have known — as they watched Madame Habib reclining in the salon of her yacht, pet cheetah at her side — that they were seeing the final performance of one of the greatest of the silent screen actresses, and that her last role was itself a conscious parody of the very qualities that had once made her famous throughout Europe and North America.

For a heady decade her name was synonymous with passionate love-making and "continental" sophistication. Her rumoured affairs with Chaplin and Valentino, her marriage to Prince Serge Mdivani, made headlines.

Today this woman, who once worked with Max Reinhardt and who helped to mould the Lubitsch touch, is nearly forgotten. An entire generation of film students has never seen her work. Many of her pictures have been lost or destroyed; those that have survived are preserved in archives. And Negri herself, well into her eighties, virtually blind, leads a reclusive life in San Antonio. She refuses to give interviews but will, on occasion, respond to questions put to her by letter.



Pola Negri's life before stardom, as after, presents something of an enigma and perhaps a carefully cultivated one at that. Depending on whom you listen to — studio star bios, screen magazines of the 20s and 30s, the star herself — Negri was born in Poland (in Yanow, Lipno or Bromberg) in 1894, 1897 or even 1903. Her father was either an itinerant gypsy violinist, a Hungarian farmer or a Polish fabric merchant; he died in 1905 of natural causes, or disappeared after being exiled to Siberia for aiding the Russian Revolution of 1905, or he may have been simply and inexplicably murdered by the Cossacks.

Negri herself may have studied ballet in Warsaw with Fokine, although some accounts maintain she trained in St. Petersburg and danced, of course, for the Czarina. Perhaps she was, as some claimed, only a cabaret dancer. Even her Polish nationality has been questioned: one skeptic said she was "as Polish as sauerkraut," while another hinted she was really Paula Schwartz, a Berlin shopgirl with an active imagination and a lot of determination. In her own book, *Memoirs of a Star,* Negri claims to have told "the real truth," which turns out to be suspiciously close to a scenario for a typical Pola Negri vehicle.

She says she was born Apolonia Chalupec in 1899, the daughter of Eleanora de Kielczeska, an impoverished noblewoman and Jerzy Chalupec, a Hungarian tinsmith. Soon after her birth, Chalupec joined a subversive group dedicated to overthrowing the Russian Czar. In 1905 he was arrested for his part in the murder of a Russian general and sent to prison in Warsaw. Shortly afterwards the imperial government confiscated most of their possessions and Apolonia and her mother moved to the Warsaw slums.

In Warsaw, Apolonia auditioned for the Imperial Ballet Company. Miraculously she was accepted and after two years of rigorous training, made her debut as The Dancing Doll in Coppelia. Her dance career was cut short by an attack of tuberculosis. While recuperating in a sanitarium, she decided to try her hand at acting. Her mother was horrified and forbade her to go on the stage, so Apolonia began to rehearse in secret for an audition at the Warsaw Imperial Academy of Dramatic Arts. To avoid suspicion, she decided to audition under an assumed name and it was then that Pola Negri was born: Pola, the dimunitive of Apolonia, and Negri, from an Italian poetess whose works she admired.

She was accepted by the Academy and after a year's preparation, made her stage debut as Hedwig in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck.* This led to several ingenue roles at Warsaw's Little Theater, and then to an invitation to play at the prestigious Rozmaitosci, Poland's national theater. She opened in *The Wild Duck,* again playing the role of Hedwig, shortly after war was declared by Russia and Germany in August, 1914. Then she was approached by Alexander Hertz, owner of the Warsaw-based Sphinx Film Company. Impressed by her performance, he wanted her to star in Poland's first two-reeler, *Niewonica Zmyslow* (*The Polish Dancer,* subsequently released in Germany as *Der Sklave Der Sinne* or *Liebe Und Leidenschaft, Love and Passion.)*

Negri claims she took the film's banal screenplay of a young dancer's rise to fame and rewrote it entirely, inserting along the way the "dance of Salome" as the highlight of the film and insisting as well that the sequence be done in color. Hertz agreed on the condition that she pay the 300-400 rubles the hand-tinting would cost. She accepted his proviso and her film career was launched.

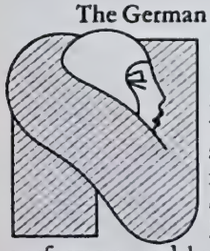
Released in 1914 or 1915, *The Polish Dancer* presented Negri in a role that would prove to be a crude prototype for the kind of woman she would often portray in her later films — sensual, impulsive, amoral, deceptively child-like. Another precedent set in this first venture: the Polish dancer is eventually killed by a jealous lover.

Like the style of many early performers who made the transition from stage to screen, Negri's performance is exaggerated by contemporary standards. She is, nevertheless, arresting, Kinetic in the purest sense, constantly on the move, propelled by a restless energy: in one sequence, her lover excites her so much that she cannot sit still. She leaps up from her chair,

embraces him heartily, sits again, jumps up again, kisses him over and over until she ends up in his lap, dark eyes shining, grinning happily. What she lacked in technique, Negri made up for in her enthusiasm for the part. She could also project a rather sultry sensuality. In the Salomé sequence, she manages the proper sinuous writhing as her partner slides his hands over her body, responding with child-like pleasure to his touch. This and other "erotic" scenes gave the film a somewhat scandalous reputation, and the film proved such a popular success that Hertz signed Negri to a long-term contract at a salary of 250 rubles ($500) a week.

The turning point in Negri's career did not come in film however, but on the stage. In 1916 or 1917, Richard Ordynski, a young Polish director who had worked with Max Reinhardt in Berlin, asked her to star in the Warsaw production of "Sumurun," a pantomime play derived from the Arabian Nights. Ordynski had taken note of her lively performance in *Niewonica Zmyslow* and cast her as an exotic dancer who is murdered by the Sultan of Baghdad when he finds her in the arms of his son. The production of "Sumurun" was well-received, and when Reinhardt decided to revive the play in Berlin, Ordynski suggested that he cast Negri as the dancer.

The German Years: 1918-1922



Negri began rehearsals for "Sumurun." Her experience with Reinhardt was fortuitous in two respects. He had a knack for recognizing and encouraging talent in unknown, inexperienced performers, and he helped Negri to refine her acting style without destroying the spontaneity which made her performance so remarkable. In addition, it was in "Sumurun" that Negri met the man who would lead her to stardom — Ernst Lubitsch. A comic actor turned film director, Lubitsch had returned to the theater to play the hunchback in Reinhardt's revival of "Sumurun." Shortly after the play opened, Paul Davidson, Ufa's top producer, met Negri, was impressed by her temperament and pantomimic ability, and signed her to a contract with Union films, persuading Lubitsch to direct her first film.

In Lubitsch, Negri found a director who had the wit and insight to channel her natural exuberance into roles which drew on that energy. In her memoirs, Negri provides an interesting insight into the nature of their relationship:

> "Working with him was an enthralling experience. We complemented each other perfectly. He knew his analytical approach might appear cold and remote if it were not coupled with my emotionalism. From the very beginning, his handling of a script had certain constants that were to persist throughout his long career. He followed the satirical line until an audience was helpless with laughter, then hit them with a tragic dénouement that brought them up short, making them wonder what had been so amusing. He took care of the former while I supplied the latter. It was the basis of our happy collaboration."

Negri took her original stage role of The Slave of Fatal Enchantment, with Lubitsch playing a hunchback.

The first feature Negri made with Lubitsch was *Die Augen Der Mummie Ma* (The Eyes of the Mummy Ma), released in Germany in 1918. Although as Negri noted, "no earth-shattering epic," the film did team her with Emil Jannings as a religious fanatic obsessed by her beauty. This obsession inevitably leads him to murder her.

A popular romantic escape from the hardships of wartime life, the film helped establish the careers of Jannings and Negri and also proved to be the first screen work taken seriously by the German press.

Inspired by the success of their first picture, Negri and Lubitsch joined forces to make *Carmen,* later released in America as *Gypsy Blood.* The film was voted the best German picture of 1918, and it established Negri as one of the top German screen actresses.

Both *Die Augen der Mummie Ma* and *Carmen* were representative of the *Kostumefilm,* or costume films, which were produced with increasing frequency toward the end of World War I. The historical pageant film — which came into its own with Lubitsch's production of *Madame Dubarry* in 1919 — also reflected the trend toward escapist entertainment. The epic scope and impressive crowd scenes, together with its "psychological" interpretation of history, made *Dubarry* a brilliant success in both Europe and America.

Madame Dubarry premiered on September 19, 1919 at the Ufa-Palast Am Zoo in Berlin, accompanied by a full scale symphony orchestra playing a specially-composed musical score. The film was highly successful, running three months to full houses in Berlin and later exhibited in Ufa theaters throughout Germany, and then all of Europe. In France, however, the press viewed it as an attempt to undermine the ideals of the French Revolution, and it met with a lukewarm reception.

When Ufa attempted to sell *Madame Dubarry* in the United States, they encountered intense anti-German feeling. The film was rejected by every major American distributor, but eventually Associated First National Pictures acquired the rights for $40,000. The film premiered in New York on December 12, 1920 at the Capitol Theater. To ensure its success, First National changed the title to the more sensational *Passion* and billed it first as an "Italian" picture and then as a "European" spectacle. Only Negri's name, which betrayed nothing of the film's German origins, was advertised.

Any doubts about *Passion* evaporated after the premiere. It played five performances a day at the 5,500 seat Capitol Theater, and attendance during the first week was estimated at 106,000. Trade journals reported gross box office receipts of $10,000 per day. At one point 40,000 people tried to gain admittance to the theater and extra policemen had to be dispatched to control the crowd.

American audiences, accustomed to prettified, mannered actresses, were excited by Negri's exuberance and lack of camera-consciousness. Lubitsch refused to romanticize her with soft-focus or to photograph only her best side.

Back in Germany, Lubitsch and Negri started production on *Sumurun,* the fantasy play that had first brought them together. Negri took her original stage role of Uannaia, The Slave of Fatal Enchantment, with Lubitsch playing a hunchback. The murder and sexual intrigue survived intact and revived with a vengeance, so much so that German censors clipped 65 objectionable feet before allowing *Sumurun*'s release.

Sumurun was well-received both in Germany, where it premiered on September 1, 1920, and in America, where it was released as *One Arabian Night* in 1921. American audiences were surprised and delighted with Lubitsch's careless, nearly cynical treatment of sex and love, and the picture introduced a risqué wit that put an end to the heavy-handed sexual displays of Cecil B. DeMille.

After finishing *Sumurun,* Negri returned to Poland to visit her mother. Davidson had asked her to bring back a print of her first film, *The Polish Dancer,* so he could capitalize on her popularity and

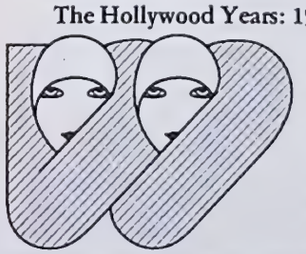
release it in Germany. She secured a print, but was stopped at the Polish border for exporting a film without a license. The presiding officer, Count Eugene Dambski, took such a liking to Negri that he married her after a whirlwind courtship. Dambski turned out to be an insensitive husband and after a year, Negri returned to Germany to continue her film career. Later she stated succinctly, "The meeting was romantic, the marriage was not."

In 1921 Negri and Lubitsch made an expressionist film, *Die Bergkatze* (The Mountain Cat). The picture was a box office flop in Germany because of its grotesque humour and satire on the military. However, it contains some interesting expressionistic touches: marionette-like soldiers wash their faces and brush their teeth in unison, snowmen come to life and dance in a luminous cave, a bridegroom sheds a river of tears. The acting is similarly stylized and the film gives Negri some comic moments.

Negri was to make one more picture in Germany with Lubitsch — *Die Flamme,* in 1922. Between 1917 and 1922 she made more than a score of films — mainly inconsequential melodramas — with other directors. Several of these films, in addition to the more popular Lubitsch ones, were released in America, and soon Negri was receiving contract offers from several American studios. Fox and First National reps went to Berlin to sign her to long-term contracts, but she turned them down for the Hamilton Theatrical Corporation, which in turn sold her contract to Famous Players-Lasky. In the fall of 1922, Negri set sail for America and stardom.

In the fall of 1922, Negri set sail for America and stardom.

The Hollywood Years: 1923-1928



When the transatlantic liner *Imperial* sailed into New York late in the fall of 1922, the docks were thronged with reporters, photographers and sightseers waiting for a glimpse of one of the first big imported stars. A tugboat, specially chartered by Adolph Zukor, steamed out to meet the liner. On board a band played the Polish national anthem and a banner proclaimed "Welcome Pola Negri." A waiting limousine whisked the actress into New York City where, that evening, Adolph Zukor staged a gala Viennese dinner in honor of his new protégé. After a series of interviews, photographic sessions and theater parties — including a visit to the Ziegfield Follies where she received a standing ovation from the audience — Negri boarded the Twentieth Century Limited for Hollywood.

The world of Hollywood film production was far different from the one Negri had left behind in Germany. By the early twenties, filmmaking had become highly standardized. To cut costs, studios adopted assembly line methods of production which enabled them to crank out one or more films a week. The formula film made mass production easy, since everything that went into the film could be standardized — the plot, the director, the star, the sets, the costumes. The star with a bankable name was less an artist than an economic asset, and vast sums were spent on the grooming of new stars who could attract audiences to the box office. All too often, star pictures were only showcases for the featured performer, and less attention was paid to the dramatic integrity of the film than to the star's wardrobe and close-ups.

Assembly line techniques may have improved efficiency, but they also made Hollywood films dull and predictable. When Negri's pictures hit the American screen, attendance rose dramatically. Audiences were impressed by the skillful camera work and editing, the handling of the mob scenes, the attention paid to minor characters and the integration of the star into the dramatic fabric of the film. Negri was unlike any star American audiences had seen. With her hair unkempt and wrong side to the camera, she was unglamourous and often unbeautiful, yet this was part of the exciting naturalness of her performance.

Impressed by her potential box office appeal, Paramount acquired her American contract and then proceeded to destroy the very qualities which had made her so attractive. First, they got rid of the striking black and white "mask" (charcoaled eyes and dead white powder) she had worn in the Lubitsch pictures. It was replaced by subtler makeup which still accented her eyes and mouth, but brought the whole into a more harmonious tonal range. Her bushy hair was arranged in soft, face-flattering waves or the sleek and glossy flapper bob. Another touch of glamour was added by the hazy, soft-focus photography so in vogue at the time. As a result her striking features were blurred into a luminous, lovely but nearly anonymous face.

Paramount then found Negri roles that were wholly unsuited to her temperament. The "woman of the world" or "femme fatale" was a popular type at the time, and Negri could easily have played a sexually alluring, sexually experienced woman with the touch of neurosis that the role demands. However, with the Hays Office trying to improve Hollywood's image, Paramount, like other major studios, had agreed to censor its own films. As a result, emphasis was placed on the goodness and purity of the femme fatale's soul, and her "wickedness" became merely a façade concealing a heart of gold. Negri objected strenuously to this type of role, but was offered little else during her Hollywood heyday.

In 1923, Negri made her first three films for Paramount — *Bella Donna, The Cheat* and *The Spanish Dancer.* If her Lubitsch films mocked traditional values, Negri's films reduced them to the level of cliché. Part of the problem lay with the directors assigned to Negri's pictures. *The Spanish Dancer*'s director, Herbert Brenon, proved too sentimental to deal properly with an actress of her temperament. And during the making of *Bella Donna* and *The Cheat,* she quarreled with director George Fitzmaurice. In her memoirs she wrote: "He was a charming urbane man; socially we had much in common, but artistically we were miles apart. He was the perfect director for the well-upholstered, lighter-veined drawing room drama in which Hollywood specialized, but he had no understanding of how to handle an actress of my background and approach to a role..." The original script for *The Cheat* called for her to do a series of acrobatic stunts which included jumping from an airplane into the water, from the water onto a motorcycle, and from the motorcycle into a moving train where she was to run along the tops of the coaches. Negri refused to consider the role until that sequence was eliminated. Similar displays of temperament earned her the reputation of being "uncooperative."

In 1924, Negri played exotic heroines in *Shadows of Paris, Men* and *Lily of the Dust.* Then came *Forbidden Paradise* and a happy reunion with her old mentor, Ernst Lubitsch. *Forbidden Paradise* was a sly spoof on Catherine the Great's legendary nymphomania. Negri plays the czarina with

the regal grace of one born to command, while her emotionalism finds an outlet in Catherine's consuming passion for the hero, Lt. Alexis (Rod LaRocque). At their first tête-à-tête, she embraces him hungrily, eyes burning, breasts heaving. Yet this same emotionalism — which in the hands of other directors sometimes verged on melodrama — with the addition of Lubitsch's satiric wit is used to indicate the Czarina's frivolous nature. In one sequence, while she embraces Alexis passionately, she craftily steps onto a footstool so that their lips can meet more easily. Later, she collapses "miserably" into a chair — and checks the effect in her mirror.

Lubitsch out-manoeuvred the Hays Office with sly visual, rather than verbal, innuendo concerning the Czarina's considerable sexual appetite. In a banquet scene she pins a large gilt medal on the hero's chest as a token of her affection. The meaninglessness of the gesture is revealed as the camera moves across rows of other soldiers, all wearing miniature versions of the same medal. The size of her current lover's medal makes its own comment. *Forbidden Paradise* was widely praised by the critics, and was voted one of the "Ten Best Films of 1925."

In spite of the critical success of *Forbidden Paradise,* Negri's popularity at the box office had already begun to wane. She was no longer the exciting, volatile performer who had intrigued American audiences in her early imported pictures, but a star out of the same mold as countless others. Negri was acutely aware of the problem and repeatedly voiced her dissatisfaction with the way Paramount was handling her career. In an interview she complained, "Picture producers... They have two or three little molds into which they pour you. Every story has to be the same. Even if you make them good, they take them into the projecting room and cut them all to pieces. I can't make this kind of expression because they would like it in Keokuk, Iowa. I can't do my hair this way to please the exhibitor in Mobile, Mississippi. I've got to be myself."

Negri's waning popularity may also have reflected a decline of public interest in exotic screen types. Negri's exoticism had always been a big selling point with the press, and fan magazines were filled with articles which reinforced this image. Her frequent outbursts on the set were ascribed to her gypsy-like temperament, and her alleged pronouncements on love were always fatalistic. The press seized with particular relish upon a "feud" between Negri and Gloria Swanson (largely the concoction of Paramount's publicity department) and her stormy affair with Chaplin. All this made good fodder for the fan magazines, but other home-grown stars were becoming increasingly attractive to the public. Clara Bow's flapper was a type the average working girl could identify with. Gloria Swanson's extravagance appealed to the upwardly mobile middle classes, while her self-deprecating sense of humour proved that underneath the glamourous facade, she was just "plain folk," a thoroughly "American" girl. Negri, however — exotic, emotional, arrogant — was beginning to seem too "foreign" to appeal to the popular taste.

The press seized with particular relish upon her stormy affair with Chaplin.

A Woman of the World (1925) is especially interesting because it seems to reflect the public's reaction to Negri's exoticism. Its absurd plot has her playing a continental countess who, on a visit to the American mid-west, falls in love with a small-town district attorney. Perhaps more interesting than the film itself was the publicity it generated.

The filming of *A Woman of the World* was the subject of several articles in popular screen magazines, all of them emphasizing the taming of the "tigercat," echoing Paramount's attempts at changing Negri's image into a more pleasingly American one. *Photoplay* published several pencil sketches by Mal St. Clair showing Negri becoming a "cooperative" star. Another writer claimed that on the set, Negri indulged in such all-American pastimes as rollerskating, eating hot dogs, drinking soda pop, "playing with kids," and even asked to be hit in the face with a cream pie. Her next two films — *Crown of Lies* and *Good and Naughty* (1926) — were light romantic comedies, a distinct departure from the melodramatic nature of her previous vehicles.

In the meantime, however, the biggest and most disastrous publicity brouhaha of Negri's career was brewing. She had met Rudolph Valentino — whom H. L. Mencken once called "catnip to women" — at a costume party given by Marion Davies, and soon after they allegedly began an affair. Late in the spring of 1926, Valentino went to New York to publicize his latest film, *Son of the Sheik.* In August, he contracted severe stomach pains and was taken to the Polyclinic Hospital, where he died on August 26 of a perforated stomach ulcer and local peritonitis. Amid the uproar following his death, Negri left Hollywood on the train in a state of near-collapse, accompanied by her physician, her secretary and a nurse. Paramount also sent along a press agent who issued a series of statements en route which culminated in the announcement that Negri and Valentino had planned to marry. However, skeptical reporters, recalling that Valentino had always been non-committal about Negri, greeted the announcement with derision. They suspected that her cross-country dash to New York, hysterical grief at Valentino's coffin, and innumerable "collapses" before and after the funeral were a grandstand play for publicity, an attempt to revive her waning career. In vain, Negri would protest, "They do not understand me. I am a child of my race. I am Slav. I cannot help that I have not the restraint of the Anglo-Saxon. My emotions seem to them exaggerated, but I am not acting." Instead of grieving with her, the public found her actions laughable and began to weary of her temperamental excesses. Increasingly, writers began to refer to her as La Negri — a mocking reference to her emotionalism.

After the furor subsided, Negri completed *Hotel Imperial* (1926), with director Mauritz Stiller. In order to salvage what was left of her career, Paramount tried another change of image, this time casting her as a hotel chambermaid. Negri was extremely optimistic in the beginning. As she wrote in her memoirs, "At last my relationship with the studio was becoming what I had hoped it would from the time I first started to work in Hollywood. Not only were they selecting properties that were guarantees against type-casting, but they were surrounding me with the very finest production artists available. If this continued, and there was no reason to suppose that it would not, my American career could be of very long duration."

Although the role of the chambermaid was a departure from the kind of roles Negri had played before, the plot of the film was again pure melodrama. Negri's performance is so subdued that her presence is scarcely felt in many scenes. One suspects that the listlessness is due in part to Stiller's method of direction, in which actors were instructed to internalize their emotions and reduce facial expressions to a minimum.

Interestingly, Negri gave a beautifully-modulated performance in her next film, *Barbed Wire* (1927), playing a French girl who falls in love with a German prisoner during the war. Although the script calls for many quick emotional changes, her acting is quite subtle, filled with the tension she lacked in *Hotel Imperial.*

After completing *Barbed Wire,* Negri went to Paris, where she unexpectedly married Serge Mdivani, an impecunious Georgian prince. Skeptics immediately

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Brent Maddock

BREAKING INTO FILM

The man you need to meet is always out to lunch

"I have an M.A. in filmmaking and I don't care what you say, this is degrading," mumbled my old film school chum Scott as we huddled over our chattering Moviolas in a cold garage of an editing room, slipping shoddy English dialogue into the mouths of shoddy Japanese actors in an even shoddier Japanese sci-fi TV show. If not for the depressing fact that any number of film school grads would have bartered their very degrees for a film industry job, even this one, Scott and I would have told the fat man with the cowboy hat who called himself the "Producer" of this questionable venture to "take a walk." "$125 a week is all I can pay, boys. Take it or leave it." We took it, philosophically, and told ourselves it would make a great "payin'-our-dues" story for the Johnny Carson show.

It was somewhere between "Quick, Dr. Fang, turn on your Death-Ray!" and "Kyoto, stop screaming!" that my friend commented, "If everyone in this town ("this town" is a euphemism for Hollywood, indigenous to residents of that community and used in much the same way New Yorkers refer modestly to their hometown as "The City" or as Pittsburghers mysteriously refer to their town as "Pittsburgh") who's writing a screenplay or scrambling to become a film director or hustling to be an editor all found work at the same time, there'd be enough films produced for everyone in the country to go see a brand new double-feature every night of the week . . . if they really wanted to." He shook his head from side to side and sank lower toward his Moviola. Not knowing whether he was bending under the awful weight of this realization or simply straining to get a closer look at Kyoto's mouth, I decided to comment soothingly, "I wonder if the insurance industry or the teaching profession has as many hopeful hangers-on as the film industry?" "Of course not!" my friend snapped back, sliding Kyoto's scream a few frames forward, "In life, you're either a tree surgeon or you're not." I nodded wisely as Scott continued. "But, in this town *everybody's* a filmmaker!" My friend's voice had risen to a trembling falsetto and I decided to let the subject drop.

His observations were close to being on the money. While truckloads of young natives of L.A., upon coming of age, stream away from their hometown, delighted to leave behind what they sense to be the essence of the super-market landscape and the fast-food mentality, just as many young people arrive, visions of making feature films dancing in their heads. They cram film schools to capacity and jam the waiting rooms and incoming phone lines of casting directors, agents and producers. They add their numbers optimistically to a churning, burning, almost collusive class of screenwriters, directors, editors, composers and producers-to-be. At the distant side of this swarm that energetically buzzes the brink of the film big time are those who quietly, perhaps resentfully, abandon their visions of "making it" and slip off to more stable professions and smoother styles of life.

Orbiting that bright star of success and security like some distant asteroid belt, my filmmaker cronies and I manage to string out a living between freelance film jobs. A month or so after finishing up with Kyoto and Dr. Fang, my meanderings in search of sustenance led me to a job synching dailies for a small medical film company. Eleanor Grand, a young editor recently out of a Mid-Western film school, had made the obligatory rounds of non-union production companies, big and small, and counted herself lucky to be working there at $150 a week, even if the short she was editing *was* a rather graphic demonstration of the latest procedures for separating Siamese twins. Each time I'd look in her direction she'd ask my opinion of the sequence she had just cut. I tried to keep my back to her as much as possible. "This town is crazy," she said (note how quickly they pick up the local jargon). "I spent weeks on the phone trying to find an editing job and invariably the person

"Hey! Why don't we all get together and work on a screenplay?"

who's doing the hiring is either away on vacation, out on location or out to lunch. People take long lunch hours here, don't they?" "Yes, they do," I answered sympathetically, "Some producers like to nip down to Tijuana for tacos." "If they're off on vacation, I can understand it," said Eleanor, slipping into the coldly competitive "us and them" perspective held by most film industry hopefuls. "They're the ones with the steady incomes; we're just the coolie labor force."

"Coolies is right," I thought to myself. The numbers of people who land jobs in the film industry are comprised mostly of those whose jobs only faintly relate to what they really want to do. A friend who had come from New Jersey, suffering from advanced stages of Orson-Welles Syndrome (a curious malady where the sufferer is seized by the notion that, in order for his or her life to have any value, he or she must direct a feature film by the age of 25) found himself befuddled as to how he'd landed a $100 a week job sitting in the Academy Library making lists of actors' film credits for a writer of film reference guides. Even those with enough self-knowledge to know specifically what they have to offer find it necessary on occasion to pursue the oddest of odd film jobs. Martha Moran, a young filmmaker living in Santa Monica, fills in the lean periods between educational film jobs by editing the 16mm home movies of a Tuscaloosa lawyer named Leroy. The film she is currently suffering through, depicting Leroy and wife deep in the Amazon jungle, is entitled most appropriately, *Deep in the Jungle.*

There are those, however, whose pursuit of success and security in the film biz can leave them, after a few too many years, high and dry. Running across sometime-filmmakers well into their "middle years" is a sobering experience to an optimistic filmmaker in his 20s. One friend, in his late 30s, was able to decipher the writing on the wall after years of temporary editing jobs and educational film ideas that never got off the launching pad. Failing at one last effort to get into the editor's union because he lacked enough time at a single editing job, he quietly disappeared one day for San Jose where legend has it people have steady jobs.

The faces of most of this clambering, clamorous mob of fimmakers-hopefully-to-be tend, however, to be a bit younger, more hopeful and brighter-eyed. Indeed, it is hope that plays the common denominator among every editor who can't find films to edit, every composer with nothing to score and every screenwriter who can't get an agent before selling a script and can't sell a script before getting an agent. If this quality of hope accounts for some of Hollywood's sadder sights, it also seems to supply a frenetic energy that is (pardon the expression) this town's special charm. You can catch glimmers of this communal hope in the chunks of conversation that float toward you while waiting in line at the Nuart, or while waiting in line at Café Figaro, or even while waiting in line at the Alpha-Beta. "Oh, yeah, I jot a job syn-

"I've worked all those tiny production companies on Seward Avenue. Up one side and down the other. I feel like a hooker."

ching dailies for a documentary on the history of aluminum foil". . ."I might have a production assistant job on the new Scorsese film. My room-mate knows the production manager's sister". . ."I'm doing a script on 'spec' for the guy who made 'Bloodlips 5000'." As we know, hopes built on wobbly foundations have a tendency to slide you and anybody else who's sitting around your living room into the ocean. Rick Fallon, a rabid film buff in his early 20s, came to Los Angeles a few years ago with hopes of finding a production assistant job on a feature and working his way up the tenuous ladder of connections to eventually becoming a director. When, after a year and a half of scouring the production charts in the Friday trade papers, making phone calls and hearing promises, he still hadn't found a job, his wife could take no more and they split up. "She kept telling me to get a real job and I just couldn't," he explains with the flicker of the film fiend in his eyes. "There was always some production just about to start shooting that had promised me a job. I got to feel like the donkey with a carrot hanging in front of my nose. 'Call back in two weeks,' they'd say and of course that would go on and on until finally the people financing the film, a group of dentists from Seattle or something, would pull out their money. Finally I got to the point where I realized that even if I did finally get a job as a P.A., what would I be doing? I'd be a glorified errand boy and in six or eight weeks I'd be right back out of work again."

My friend Eleanor called me the other day to see if I'd unearthed any editing jobs. She'd been working at a variety of production companies for short stints, filling in for staff editors too taken with the flu to thread another Moviola, or taking up the overflow work when a producer said yes he did expect the film on the Aztecs from outer space to be completed on time and no he didn't care that the crucial sequence of the Mexican Indians playing frisbee had been ruined in the lab. "I've worked all those tiny production companies on Seward Avenue," she explained wearily, "Up one side of the street and down another. I feel like a hooker."

Considering the hustling that's required of free-lance filmmakers, especially those still wet behind the ears, it's small wonder that the accounts of the ease and nonchalance with which some of the early film greats stumbled into their careers can sting like Italian dressing poured on an open wound. Frank Capra bluffing his way into his first directing job or a young William Wyler, I beleive it was, taking over for a soused director out on a distant location are stories saddly alien to the rigid realities of today's film industry.

We laughed when on the first day of film school a few years back, the Department Chairman gave us his "Be Dedicated As Hell Or Get Out Now" speech. He was right. To persevere in this restless spawning ground of the film industry-to-be one must nourish both a level of confidence and a dispassionate eye cocked toward the possibility that one may, in fact, have less to offer than expected. Circling along the periphery of the film business one has occasion to bump into hustlers over and over again. It's refreshing, therefore, to meet someone whose talent is genuine and whose dedication and enthusiasm have remained unbruised in this school of hard knocks.

Peter Fowler, a screenwriter in his mid-20s, had written a number of scripts and approached a number of indifferent or overworked agents and producers before finally selling a screenplay he had managed to write while working as a porno movie house projectionist. "I'd make a reel change, check focus, put up the next reel and sit back down again and keep on typing. Now that I'm able to spend full time on a script, I find that I still have to stand up and stretch my legs every twenty minutes or so."

Also just starting out as a working screenwriter is Kyle Morris, who quickly learned in his first few months in L.A. that, when asked what he did, answering "working on a screenplay" evoked one of two similar responses: the half-lidded, yawn-stifling "I've heard it all before" look or a quick rolling of the eyeballs Heavenwards indicating essentially the same sentiment. "I realized that it was necessary to tell people that I also get paid for what I do," Kyle adds. With this new piece of information interjected into the conversation the weary facial expression of the questioner goes through a marked improvement. The sardonic slant of the lips curves into an interested smile, the eyes widen with interest, sometimes even bug out in surprise, and the person asks with a vivid quiver of respect, "Oh yeah? You're making money writing screenplays? That's pretty neat. You know, it seems to me that everybody in this town is working on a screenplay. Did you ever stop to think what would happen if everybody who was writing a screenplay got the thing produced as a film? We'd probably be up to our eyeballs in movies."

Yes, we know.

Brent Maddock is the author of The Films of Jacques Tati (*Scarecrow*), *and has recently written and directed an educational film which stars a walking, talking dictionary—* Dictionary: The Adventure of Words (*Barr Films*).

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Flamingo Hours/Gene Youngblood

"Nothing could have prepared us for the triumph of Rhinegold. *It is, quite simply, a masterpiece."*

To that pantheon of brilliant filmmakers known as The Munich School we must now add the name of Niklaus Schilling. A Swiss writer-director-cinematographer living in West Germany, Schilling gained international attention in 1977 with *The Expulsion From Paradise*. It's a metaphysical fable on the German film industry, and there's no mistaking it as the work of an inspired and talented man. Satirical, bittersweet, flamboyantly romantic and picaresque, the film reminded me variously of Bunuel, Fellini, Chaplin and Paul Verhoeven. Yet it's totally original. It also features a woman, Elke Haltaufderheide, who is simply one of the most hypnotic actresses I've seen in years. Pale, withdrawn, sensual and slightly tragic, she's wistful like Ingrid Caven and perverse like Irm Hermann, with a face that reminds me of both. In a word, she's haunting. *Expulsion From Paradise* has its problems—there are comic scenes that don't work at all—but its infectious and exuberant energy transcends them. The consensus was that Schilling is someone to watch. Nothing, however, could have prepared us for the triumph of his next and most recent film, *Rhinegold* (1978). It is, quite simply, a masterpiece.

The title refers to a particular route of the Trans-Europe Express and the train that travels it, the TEE Rhinegold. A career diplomat and his sensuous wife board separately and coincidentally at different stops, each unaware of the other's presence. The woman's lover is a porter on the train. The husband finds them together. Back in his compartment he stabs her and jumps off. Suddenly coming to his senses, he commandeers a taxi and follows in pursuit. The woman, meanwhile, is mortally wounded. Not wanting to incriminate her husband she conceals the wound and sits dying in her compartment. Cut to the taxi racing after the speeding train as it recedes into the twilight. Cut to the porter looking in on his lover from time to time, unaware of her fate.

Gene Youngblood is the author of Expanded Cinema. *His new book,* The Videosphere, *will be published this year by E.P. Dutton & Co.*

So we're watching a Hitchcock-Griffith crime-and-passion melodrama. Well, surprise! Into the compartment comes a beautiful contemporary Angel of Death who sits and watches, not speaking. Presently she's joined by a little Gretchen out of Goëthe, and an old man who recites the legend of Lorelei, the siren of the Rhine who lured sailors to shipwreck. A haunting Wagnerian chorus is on the soundtrack. Out the window a mythological Germany passes by, the Germany of Goëthe, with castles atop mountain peaks, the Rhine glimmering in the sunset. What began as a thriller has now become a metaphorical portrait of the fatherland that's heroic, tragic, and sublime.

In a fever, her life slipping away, the woman dreams of her lover. We see these visions. They are among the most exquisite in the history of cinema. I cannot describe the majesty and romance of these scenes. They are profoundly erotic, with no nudity at all. An excruciating atmosphere of apocalypse and hope overtakes the film. The music soars to ethereal heights. The images grow ever more astonishing, luminescent, transcendental. The tragedy follows its destiny with a compelling and almost unbearable rhythm. I was devastated by this picture. Everything about it is perfection. But above all there's the performance of Elke Haltaufderheide. Every frame of the film worships her, and her magnetism is overpowering. Her haunting beauty is equalled only by the film itself, that is, by the inspired vision of Niklaus Schilling who belongs with Herzog, Wenders and Fassbinder as one of the giants of the New German Cinema.

As of this writing neither *Expulsion From Paradise* nor *Rhinegold* have North American distribution. I cannot imagine this circumstance lasting much longer. Meanwhile, *Rhinegold* may be obtained from Cine-International, Leopoldstr. 18, D-8000, Munich 40, Federal Republic of Germany. And *Expulsion* is distributed by Munic Films GmbH, Friedrich-Herschelstr. 17, D-8000, Munich 80.

Another impressive German film is Edgar Reitz' *Zero Hour* (1976). Set in a rural town in July, 1945, at the end of the war, the film evokes the sense of bewilderment and uncertainty among refugees as they await the occupation of American and Soviet victors. Shot in gorgeous black and white, the film could be called neo-realism (it's especially reminiscent of *The Bicyle Thief*) if it weren't so romantic, wistful and nostalgic. Viewed from the perspective of a little boy who'll understand only much later what his curious eyes are seeing at the moment, *Zero Hour* is a touching and elegant portrait of humanity. Reitz, like almost all of his colleagues, is a master of cinema. And this movie has several of the most stunning crane shots ever filmed. It can be obtained through the Goëthe Institute, 1014 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028.

Walter Gutman is one of the most charming, civilized, generous human beings I've met. Not only that, he's a poet, a very fine filmmaker, and a supreme connoisseur of women and of history, insofar as it involves women, art, and culture. Many readers may be familiar with his previous works, such as *The Grapedealer's Daughter* and *Barbara Fritchie and Stonewall Jackson*. However, my favorite Walter Gutman movie—and I think his best—is *The March On Paris 1914 of Generaloberst Alexander von Kluck and His Memory of Jessie Holladay*. Unlike the Amazons of Walter's movies, Jessie is demure, petite, aloof, and aristocratic. I fell in love with her, and with *The March On Paris*. It's a classic of naïve or primitive cinema—which means it's very wise. The voice-over narration is Walter at the height of his poetic power, reminiscent of Gertrude Stein in rhythm and simplicity. The images are very beautiful. The tone is nostalgic, humorous. Above all else, however, there's a tremendous feeling of romance in Walter's adoration of, and respect for, young Jessie. You just don't find this unabashed worship of the feminine mystique in very many movies (Truffaut's *The Man Who Loved Women* comes to mind), and certainly not with Walter's puckish charm. Cinematically, conceptually, in every respect, *The March On Paris* is a gem. In his new film, *Erotic Signals*, Walter returns to his familiar theme of the Amazon woman—wrestler, acrobat, model for renaissance paintings—refining and expanding on previous motifs. I think it's very fine, but for me *The March On Paris* remains in a class by itself. All of Walter's films can be obtained from Hawk Serpent Productions, 205 E. 60th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

James Benning's *11 X 14* is a classic of a different kind: a "structuralist" film that tries to be narrative, a narrative film that wants to be structuralist. A series of mostly static landscape shots in the midwest, the film contains only the barest suggestion of a story: the same people appear, reappear, do things, vanish. Also there's a linear quality in the progression of the images—which are themselves inherently suggestive of some

larger context that never materializes. The film is hypnotic; it keeps you dangling continually. It's the kind of movie Antonioni would make if he were a minimalist-conceptualist-structuralist type. *11 X 14* may well be the most important experiment in feature-length narrative yet produced in America. It's distributed by James Benning, 525 W. Symmes, Norman, Oklahoma 73069.

Confessions Of A Cel Washer/ Chuck Jones

"Tex, at long last I have the privilege of telling you that you are an artist and a genius."

It is difficult to be profound, analytical, or discerning about the art of Tex Avery, because profundity tends to interrupt laughter and this is a poor trade indeed. Tex was—and is—a genius. As one of his animators in the late 1930s I was as ignorant of his genius as I suppose Michelangelo's apprentices were oblivious to the fact that they too were working with genius. In spite of that intellectual weakness on my part, Tex Avery's brilliance penetrated the husk of my self-assured ignorance, the ignorance that encases most twenty-year-olds. Yes, in spite of myself, I learned from him the most important truth about animation: Animation is the art of timing, a truth applicable as well to all motion pictures. And, the most brilliant masters of timing were usually comedians: Keaton, Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Langdon—and Fred "Tex" Avery.

However, learning a truth and applying it to your own professional life is the difference, as Mark Twain put it, between lightning and the lightning-bug. More on that later.

Avery was lightning. Just as unpredictable, as surprising, as spectacular as lightning—with one difference; unlike lightning Tex was funny—so you will have to bear with me and imagine funny lightning. Impossible? Well listen: Tex infused life, through the use of that funny lightning, into a rabbit named Bugs Bunny, who would have made a shambles of Watership Down—a self-serving, slightly insane Daffy Duck; a sadly lisping hunter named Elmer Fudd who, disastrously and fruitlessly, and for reasons known only to himself, continually pursued this unappetizing duo.

After that, the Avery lightning struck the entire genre of the Fitzpatrick travelogue and drove it whimpering off the screen with marvelous ridicule, and when his polar bear finally replies to the narrator "I don't care what you say, I'm cold," the echo from the travelogue must have been "I don't care what you say, I'm old-hat."

Oh, lightning doesn't care where it strikes; with Tex the lightning flashed in and out of the primal porridge of cute cartoons, including sadly mine, and out sprang a Crackpot Quail, a Haunted Mouse, a very, very, Red Hot Riding Hood, a Satyr-Maniacal Wolf, a small Droopy, a canine cross between Muhammed Ali and Albert Einstein with a voice like a cooing dove. Dove? How about 900 pound King-Size Canary? And the world's smallest Half-Pint Pygmy?

A Pygmy by a giant? To slip metaphors again, yes, and for good reason. If I am going to thank Tex Avery for what he taught me I must have something more stable than lightning, hence the giant. What Tex taught me was this:

1. You must love what you caricature. You must not mock it—unless it is ridiculously self-important, like the solemn live-action travelogues of that day.

2. You must learn to respect that golden atom, that single-frame of action, that 1 / 24th of a second, because the difference between lightning and the lightning-bug may hinge on that single frame.

3. You must respect the impulsive thought and try to implement it. You cannot perform as a director by what you already know, you must depend on the flash of inspiration that you do not expect and do not know.

4. You must remember always that only man of all creatures can blush—or needs to, that only man can laugh—or needs to, and that if you are in that trade of helping others to laugh and to survive by laughter, then you are privileged indeed.

5. Remember always that character is all that matters in the making of great comedians in animation and in live-action.

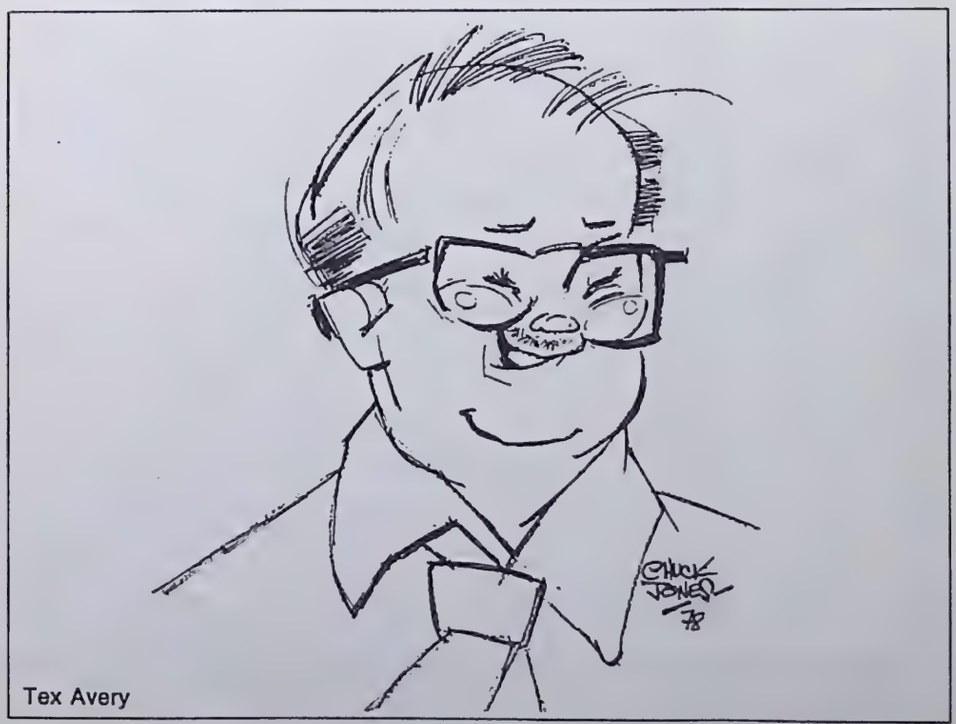
6. Keep always in your mind, your heart and your hand that timing is the essence, the spine, and the electrical magic of humour—and of animation.

Of course never once did anyone hear words such as these from Tex Avery. He was not one to pontificate. But for all of us who worked with him and beside him the message was loud and clear; by his example he taught us. I would have imitated him, I suppose, if I had had the remotest idea as to how to go about it, but since imitation of Tex Avery was impossible—others tried and failed—I found to my pleasure and surprise that these rules applied equally well to all humour and all character animation. So there was plenty of room for me to seek my own way.

Robert Frost once defined the word "poet" as a gift-word, you cannot give it to yourself. So for all of us, all over the world, Tex, we who have laughed so uproariously with you salute you, and for all of us in animation who owe you so much I happily and at long last have the privilege of telling you that you are an artist and a genius, gift-words both.

Perhaps Raphael Sabbatini said it best in the opening lines of *Scaramouche*: "He was born with the gift of laughter and a belief that the world was mad."

Chuck Jones, animator extraordinaire *and director of such stars as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Wile E. Coyote, was director of animation at Warner Bros. for 26 years. He has recently produced a number of televised animated specials.*



Tex Avery

OSHIMA

continued from page 27

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Jan. 12. Another grey, brilliant, and unseasonably warm day. And, early this morning, another strange dream—of New York in a fiery chaos, with buildings falling and mysterious planes and dirigibles flying

overhead... I've been feeling very hyper and schizoid for the last few days—too much wine and cognac, too many experiences to assimilate. And Dauman is a bit angry at the fact that I'll be leaving for Yugoslavia next week, where I may be asked to write a screenplay for a film on the futuristic inventor, Nikola Tesla (a man who, ironically enough, supposedly never had sex in his life—as in Rossellini's great *Blaise Pascal*)... But with New York toppling, and Paris sterile and constipated, where else to take refuge but in the "capital of the Third World"?... Despite myself, however, I've been having a good time... Dinner last night at Balzar, near St. Germain, with Dr. Sarré, who talked brilliantly about "the paranoid narcissism" of certain pseudo-left-wing tendencies (of the sort that are quite in vogue in New York now), and about "the fascistic leather-fetishism and infantile cannibalism that so often characterize the supposed *gauchistes*"... Then, this afternoon, some delicious *cuisine lyonnaise* with the least fetishistic and most elegant of *gauchistes,* Serge Daney of *Cahiers du Cinēma.* After some depressing talk about the elections ("the Left will destroy itself, just as it's doing all over the world"), Serge and I get bombed on red wine (we've been irritated by some noisy children at a nearby table) and get lost in a complicated discussion about the "humanism" of *Redbeard,* the fragmentation of point-of-view in Oshima as compared to the Japanese classical directors, and the Lacanian idea of "the phallus" (Serge: "That which passes between man and woman in the sexual act, but which neither can totally possess")... He draws some diagrams on the tablecloth to illustrate this idea, which causes some of the waiters to glower angrily at us as we're leaving. At the Metro, he tells me about the new direction *Cahiers* is taking: "We're becoming more mainstream. We may even have to abandon Marxism in order to return to the cinema..." Waiting for the train, I'm both depressed and elated by his statement, I don't know why...

Jan. 16. My two weeks in another town (a town where, sadly enough, the Lacanian Other can only appear via a great Japanese artist and a masterful Polish-Jewish producer) have come to an end. I'm at Orly waiting for the Monday afternoon flight to Zagreb, where I'll meet with the associates of director Krsto Papic. Last night at Dauman's I managed to say goodbye to nearly everyone, for an *Empire of Passion* slide-showing-cum-*sashimi*-buffet was staged for all of Dauman's and Oshima's colleagues, as well as every important film critic in Paris. Oshima was in a happy mood, and it's easy to understand why—without having seen the film, critics from *Figaro* to *Cahiers* were comparing it to Shakespeare and Sophocles (the results of Dauman's incredible publicity machine, but the comparisons aren't excessive) and predicting that the film will win a major award at Cannes... Spent my last morning here looking at the Pompeii frescoes and the Elusinian sculptures in the Louvre. It was there I found the solace I needed to begin a new voyage, to continue my search for something that both Rosselini and Rouch described to me (at different times, but in the same words)—the lost connections between the depths of human eroticism and the necessary web of communality. Before the tragic pathos of those ancient images, with *Empire of Passion* and *Voyage to Italy* and *Chronicle of a Summer* flashing amidst the neurons in my head, I finally understood that the "dream" Dauman had given me was the cinema itself—that ability to dream on many different levels in order to more intimately confront the tangled realities of our social selves... But I was a bit crestfallen when, after returning to Place Victor Hugo for my luggage, Maryse informed me that "Anatole called to say that he can't come over to say goodbye..." So I kissed her heartily ("Bonne chance, Monsieur Johnny," she giggled—she's seen *Johnny Guitar* on the TV) and headed to the street to look for a taxi. It was raining, not a cab to be found. Suddenly, the chocolate Mercedes rounded the corner and stopped in front of me. In it was the Argos Films chauffeur, who had been sent by Dauman to give me a friendly farewell and a fast ride to Orly.

John Hughes is a free-lance critic (Film Comment, The Thousand Eyes, Soho News, The Village Voice) *and filmmaker who has recently completed the scenario for* Cosmic Man, *which will be shot in the US, Canada and Yugoslavia.*

CANNES

continued from page 24

United States illegally to find work. Karl Reisz's *Who'll Stop the Rain* (ex: *Dog Soldiers*) also managed to make some serious points about the connections between the corruption of the Vietnam war and that corruption which permeates American society, without ever missing a fast-paced beat as Reisz rang changes on the action genre. And, finally, there was *The Last Waltz,* which proved not only that Martin Scorsese is the singularly most interesting director now working in American film, but that it is possible to make a joyful, graceful, and, above all, personal film from such unpromising material as a rock concert.

TRENDS

continued from page 33

the entire independent 16mm field.

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OSHIMA

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the entire independent 16mm field.

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Railroad Turnbridge brings sculptor Richard Serra's intensely disciplined vision to the trompe-l'oeil interaction between a moving steel structure and its surrounding landscape; a major visual accomplishment. Sara Petty's animated *Furies* depicts the abrupt and gentle movements of a pair of Siamese cats, intermittently realistic and abstract (I would have preferred to see it earlier in the program; in the penultimate position it seemed to serve largely as a convenient filler). The last film, Richard Rogers' *Quarry,* combines a strong visual sensitivity with social criticism, but it was the let-down of the evening for me, as I find it hard to be sympathetic to any film that subtly or openly attempts to convince me of the filmmaker's (and by extension, the viewer's) superiority to the other poor ginks who inhabit this planet.

The American Film Festival still closely follows the format created in 1954 through 1956 by the defunct Film Council of America's American Film Assembly. For financial reasons, the Educational Film Library Association has consistently disavowed its clear indebtedness to that pioneering endeavor, which was financed by the Ford Foundation. Many of the technical problems that the American Film Assembly faced have not yet been resolved by the American Film Festival: the confusion of too many screenings in too many rooms at one time; the intrusion of sounds into one room from another; the problem that most

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of the rooms cannot be completely darkened. Next year's move from the Hilton to the Americana Hotel may alleviate some of these annoyances.

One much-needed improvement would be an all-day coffee-and-tea lounge in the exhibit area where people (particularly newcomers) could meet other people conveniently and comfortably. More attention yet should be paid to filmmakers; the chairperson at an all-day program for librarians urged that all film catalogs have a filmmakers index, yet the 84-page program issued by the Festival itself does not have one! If the American Film Festival cannot be faulted for its organizational efforts and general good-will, it remains stolid and lacklustre in other areas. Perhaps in addition to using John Grierson's name for a special award, his book of collected essays should be required reading for all who participate in the Festival. His 1946 address to the American Library Association reminds us that "we must make of information and education a dramatic process of enlightenment and bring to the stubborn fact a measure of imagination and inspiration." For next year's coming-of-age celebration, imagination and inspiration are what the American Film Festival needs most.

Cecile Starr is co-editor (with Robert Russett) of Experimental Animation; *she teaches, lectures and writes on many aspects of film.*

NEGRI

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pounced on the marriage as proof that Negri's grief over Valentino's death had been publicity-oriented. On the other hand, the dead star's admirers criticized her for betraying their idol. Still others claimed that she married Mdivani for his title and accused her of trying to one-up the rest of the film colony. Negri herself says that receipts on *Barbed Wire* dropped off abruptly when the marriage was announced, and that her fan mail dwindled to a series of abusive and vitriolic letters. Whatever the case, by the end of 1927, Negri's name was no longer an asset at the box office and exhibitors had begun to refuse her pictures.

Negri made five other pictures for Paramount — *The Woman on Trial* (1927), *The Secret Hour* (1928), *Three Sinners* (1928), in which she appeared in a blonde wig, *Loves of an Actress* (1928), and *The Woman from Moscow* (1928). After she completed the last picture, Paramount refused to renew her contract. No other offers were made, and Negri left for Europe, Mdivani in tow, with considerably less fanfare than she had arrived five years earlier.

International Films: 1928-64

Although Negri's star had waned in America, she was still a box office attraction in Europe. Shortly after she and Mdivani settled into a chateau in France, Pathé asked her to star in a film of Alexandre Dumas' *Le Collier de la Reine.* Although she hoped the film would revive her career, Negri canceled out just before production was due to begin, at Mdivani's insistence. He objected to a scene in which her bodice was torn open and her shoulder branded with a "V" for *"voleuse."* Her husband's jealousy of her career, as well as his extravagant spending, led the two to separate and they were finally divorced in 1932.

In 1929 a group of independent British producers signed Negri to a one-picture contract. In London she made *Street of Abandoned Children,* playing a French prostitute who is reformed by the love of a Cornish lighthouse-keeper. After much-publicized negotiations to purchase George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* fell through, she did a four-week stint at the London Coliseum. The highlight of her act was the song, "Farewell to Love;" she later recorded the tune for His Master's Voice.

Then unexpectedly, RKO invited Negri to return to Hollywood for a voice-test and a chance to appear in a "talkie." Like many silent stars, Negri had at one time scorned the new medium. However, the lure of returning to Hollywood was too strong to resist. She arrived in America in 1931. The voice test was successful and for her first talking picture, she chose the biography of Maria Draga, a cabaret singer who married King Alexander of Serbia and who was assassinated with him during a revolution. The highlight of *A Woman Commands* (1932) was the song "Paradise," which Draga sings when she first meets the King at the cabaret. Negri's voice proves to be a pleasantly husky, although heavily-accented contralto, which fits her "continental" image. The film had a gala premiere in New York, but did poorly at the box office. When there were no other picture offers, Negri went on a vaudeville tour of the southern states.

In 1934 Negri made one film, *Fanatisme,* in France. Then, Ufa-Efa, Paramount's European sister-company, offered her a lucrative contract and off she went to Germany. In her first picture, *Mazurka* (1935), Negri wore a blonde wig, playing a woman who saves her daughter from being seduced by the same man who ruined her own marriage. She then starred in *Moskau-Shanghai* (1936), *Madame Bovary* (1937), *Tango Notturno* (1937), *Die Fromme Luge* (The Secret Lie, 1938), and *Die Nacht der Entscheidung* (The Night of the Decision, 1938). Although the films were lavishly produced, they were poorly received by German audiences and at least one writer has cited Negri's exaggerated acting as the reason.

This was not the case in *Tango Notturno,* however. Here, Negri delivers a lovely, subdued performance as Mado Doucet, a singer who becomes a cocaine addict after the death of her son. She looks older in this film, and seems to draw on a deep, personal well of sadness which makes several sequences exquisitely moving.

In the meantime, the American press reported that Negri was having an affair with Adolph Hitler. The rumour began when Goebbels, who had taken a dislike to the actress, accused her of being a Polish intelligence officer and a Jew. After an attempt to reason with Goebbels failed, Negri paid a visit to the Führer himself. An investigation followed, and in 1935 an official announcement asserted that the accusations were false. However the rumour persisted and Negri, having learned the value of publicity, would not at first deny the story. It was only when the rumour was reprinted in the French magazine, *Pour Vous,* that she sued for libel and won a public apology from the editors. In later years she denied that she had ever met Hitler.

After she completed *Die Nacht der Entscheidung,* Goebbels insisted that she make films with more propaganda value. Increasingly uneasy over the future of her career in Germany, Negri left on a vacation to the south of France and never returned to Berlin. She spent the first years of the war doing Red Cross work, but financial difficulties took her back to America in 1941, where she hoped to revive her film career. As soon as she arrived, the Internal Revenue Service sued her for non-payment of taxes. To make matters worse, no worthwhile picture offers materialized, and she was finally forced to take a low comic role in *Hi Diddle Diddle* (1943). Playing Madame Gegna Smetana, a Wagnerian opera diva, she parodied her own temperamental image from the silent days. Although Negri managed to give the part a semblance of dignity, critics picked up on her intentionally-exaggerated performance and panned the film.

After *Hi Diddle Diddle,* Negri was offered a series of similar self-parodying roles which she refused to play. She returned to New York in 1944 and retired to a small residential hotel. With most of her remaining assets tied up in Europe, she was in serious financial straits when she unexpectedly re-encountered Margaret West, a wealthy Texan whom she had met years earlier. The two became close friends and spent the next twenty years traveling between New York, California and Texas, until West died in 1964.

Negri emerged briefly from her retirement the same year for her small but vivid role in Disney's *The Moonspinners.* Once again lampooning her own exotic temperamental image, she managed to leave a new generation of moviegoers enthralled.

After completing *The Moonspinners,* Negri returned to her home in Texas. In 1964 she was honored with a film award from Germany "for long and extraordinary achievement in the development of the German film." In 1968, she received another award from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas during a retrospective of her films. And that was that. Small tribute, perhaps, for fifty years in film.

Courtenay Wyche Beinhorn is a New York-based freelance writer. She recently did work on Oliver's Story, *and is currently writing a detective novel.*

BOOK NEWS

Reference Books

The business considerations essential to the success of an independent filmmaking enterprise are addressed in "The Business of Filmmaking," a new publication available (at $6.95) from Eastman Kodak Company, Department 454, Rochester, NY 14650. Budgeting, distribution, promotion, scripts and daily production reports are among the topics covered. (Why not, at the same time, suggest to the good folks at Kodak that they might consider advertising in *Take One*?)

The 500-page "Gadney's Guide to 1500 International Contests, Festivals and Grants in Film & Video, Photography, TV-Radio Broadcasting, Writing, Playwriting and Journalism" is now available at $15.95, complete with a money-back guarantee, from Festival Publications, P.O. Box 10180, Glendale, CA 91209.

Erin Fleming, Groucho Marx's controversial housekeeper-secretary, is hard at work on her memoirs of their life together, having already turned down offers of help from Truman Capote and Terry Southern.

Certainly an unusual source for a motion picture is *Report No. 13,* a book on systems engineering published by the M.I.T. Press back in 1968. The Report summarized the work of students and faculty on the problem of what would happen if an asteroid headed directly for Earth, and seems to have served as the primary source for the currently in-production *Meteor.* A novelization of the *Meteor* screenplay has already been sold to Warner Books and ABC has paid $3-million for television rights to the picture. At last word, M.I.T. attorneys and the film's producers were talking it out.

It's All Rights, Ma

Universal has paid Andrew Bergman a good six figures (plus a profit participation) for screen rights to his *Hollywood and LeVine.* ... Newly-formed Orion Pictures paid $500,000 for *Prince of the City* (coming in October from Houghton Mifflin) to serve as the basis for one of the two films that John Travolta is to star in for them. ... Paramount has paid a similar sum for film rights to Christina Crawford's memoirs of late-mom Joan, *Mummy, Dearest* (already sold to paperback for a further $750,000!). ... Lester Persky has scheduled his $6-million production of John Le Carré's *A Small Town in Germany,* and negotiations with a major screenwriter are underway. ... Cutlass Productions has acquired screen rights to Anaïs Nin's *Delta of Venus.* ... *Dress Gray,* a first novel by Lucian K. Truscott IV (about a death at West Point), is something of a gold mine for its author. Paperback rights have been sold to Fawcett for $800,000, and now Paramount has picked up the movie rights for $200,000 plus escalators. ... Also in the big-bucks category is Mario Puzo, who is reported to be getting $750,000, *plus* 5% of the *gross* (can this be true?) for writing the *outline* (not even the full screenplay) for *The Godfather—Part III.* ... Eddie Constantine, who is now writing more than acting or singing, has had his *The Proprietor* optioned by Carlo Ponti for a possible picture. ... The long-awaited filmization of Mordecai Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman* is now supposed to roll next year, with Ted Kotcheff directing George Segal in the lead role. ... Georges-Alain Vuille has acquired the motion picture rights to James Clavell's *Tai-Pan* from Run Run Shaw. ... Otto Preminger is said to have laid out $400,000 for Graham Greene's new novel, *The Human Factor,* which Tom Stoppard is scripting. ... And Diane Keaton's managers have optioned *Final Payments,* a novel about a young woman freed to make her own life after the death of her invalid father.

On the strength of the feature tie-in, Dell has renewed its rights to the Jack Finney novel, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.* Cost: $100,000.

At least three biographies of Peter Finch appear to be in the works: His widow Eletha is working on one, as is British journalist Elaine Dundy. Now Trader Faulkner, a long-time friend of Finch's, is writing one in cooperation with Finch's first wife.

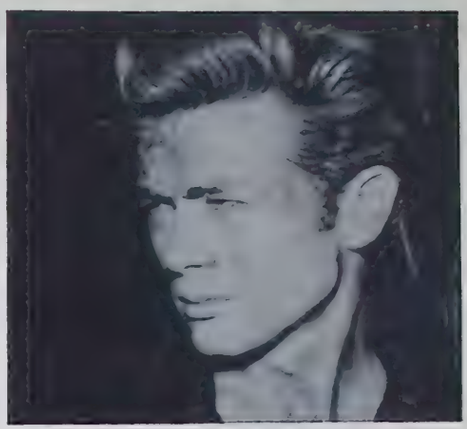
The novelization of the *Star Wars* screenplay has so far been published in 14 languages, including Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian.

REVIEWS

Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film by Joan Mellen. Pantheon Books. 1977. $12.95 hardcover. (In Canada: Random House $16.25).

The appearance of a book like *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film,* has been almost inevitable. In addition to its cultural and social significance, the history of the male screen image is also a subject of considerable commercial potential. Whatever the seriousness of the balance of Joan Mellen's previous work (she has written studies of Marilyn Monroe and the Japanese cinema), *Wolves* bears marks of a quickie commercial venture, including haphazard factual accuracy, superficial analysis, and careless writing.

This is unfortunate, since the book's thesis, while far from original, *is* important, and has apparently never been discussed systematically and in detail. Mellen suggests

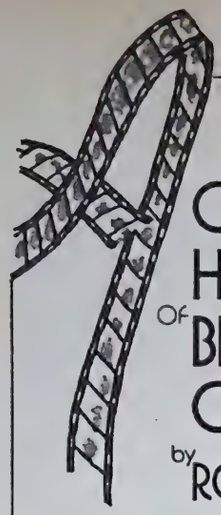


James Dean: big bad wolf?

that Hollywood's heroic images of male superheroes, strong, silent conformists, unyielding, untroubled by doubts, and, above all, unflawed by weakness or vulnerability, have had insidiously demoralizing effects on the filmgoing public. As the author puts it, the heroes they see on the screen: "afford men and women vicarious release while rendering them small and timid by comparison ... When we leave the theater ... we are left with nothing so much as an overwhelming sense of our own inadequacy. In seeming to entertain us, movies have in a very real sense exacerbated our pain."

This argument is provocative and, within certain limitations, eminently tenable, but, even in articulating it, Mellen has, with her careless language ("movies" instead of "these movies") overextended herself. Instead of confronting the limitations of her argument, the author states it as a universal truth. The balance of *Wolves* shows a similar tendency to substitute generalizations for carefully reasoned analysis. At its worst, the book reads like a trashy dramatic tale, complete with a handful of heroes—"sensitive" actors like Brando and Dean—and a plethora of villains, be they stars, directors, old-style moguls, or contemporary conglomerates.

Perhaps the most astonishing villain of the piece, though, is the Red Menace, in the guise of the Hollywood Ten and fellow travelers, nefariously conspiring to brainwash the American public with the doctrines of macho, no less than those of Moscow. Whatever the factual accuracy of Mellen's claims, they sound suspiciously like a contemporary variation on the old-fashioned theme of red baiting: "Many of the male images of the late 1930s and early 1940s were shaped by Communist screenwriters and sympathizers of the party. The Hollywood Ten alone were responsible for 159 films from 1935 to 1949, while others associated with them were almost as prolific or influential." Apart from the assumption of guilt by association, Mellen's case implicitly rests on at least two dubious assertions: that a writer is "responsible" (the word is used without qualification, and seven of the Ten were writers) for a film, and that fewer than eleven films a year, out of hundreds released, represents a signifi-



CRITICAL HISTORY OF BRITISH CINEMA

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cant—"influential"—output. These claims may be supportable, but Mellen never confronts that problem, preferring to treat her assertions as facts.

The book's superficiality is evident in its frequent inattention to factual detail; quotation marks are misleadingly placed around broad paraphrases of film dialogue, and errors of description are annoyingly persistent. Even an historical fact as easily verified as the release date of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) is inexplicably—and persistently—misidentified as 1939. Other "facts" about her cinema enemies are simply invented: "in the sixties, director Sam Peckinpah came to the financial fore," quite a feat for a director who did not make a single film ranked among the top 150 of the decade in *Variety*'s list of box office champions. (Mellen's attack on Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* snidely concludes that "this loathsome spectacle ... comes to its welcome finish.")

Though *Wolves* is expansively subtitled *Masculinity in the American Film* and abounds with phrases like "the male hero," its discussion excludes a wide variety of American films and heroes. The explicit and categorial omission of the musical is justified with the concession that it is a genre where the male hero is not a "big bad wolf." Film comedy, too, is neglected; only a handful of thirties comedies, most of them by a single director, Frank Capra, are discussed in any detail; incredibly, the entire discussion of forties comedies is restricted to a single film, *Adam's Rib*. Also overlooked are the comic elements of serious films, particularly the varying degrees of irony with which the best American filmmakers often regard their heroes. Perhaps this failure to consider humour was inevitable, given the book's doggedly solemn, occasionally missionary tone, far too lofty to consider "frivolous" matters like wit, irony, or any other aspect of comedy. Even more appalling is the complete neglect of many major directors. Mellen does not make a single reference to Alfred Hitchcock, though his heroes, including several played by Mellen-certified "big bad wolf" Cary Grant (e.g. *Notorious*) are among the most morally ambiguous ever to reach the screen. Equally unforgiveable is the omission of Fritz Lang, whose American films, from *Fury* (1936) to *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956) consistently and explicitly equate violence and revenge with moral contamination. Other omitted directors include the famous, Jean Renoir, Ernst Lubitsch, Preston Sturges, "women's directors," like Max Ophuls and Douglas Sirk, and a variety of "action" directors whose awareness of the moral ambiguity and spiritual vulnerability of the man of action would challenge and / or illuminate Mellen's thesis: Anthony Mann, Sam Fuller, Robert Aldrich, Budd Boetticher. Even for the directors she does discuss Mellen leaves out crucial films, like Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage* or Ford's *The Wings of Eagles*.

What is most significant is not so much that important films, genres, or directors are omitted, as the consistency with which this happens (Mellen is only really comprehensive in her discussion of James Dean, who had only three major screen roles; even her lengthy discussion of Brando overlooks his revealing portrayal of a homosexual army officer in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*.) Perhaps because it lacks a coherent critical framework, *Wolves* is characterized by misdirected energy. Instead of defining and qualifying its thesis by confronting complex, ambiguous films, the book makes facile generalizations about "the male hero" or "the films of the Depression" (thereby inventing a monolithic Hollywood). Instead of developing new insights into its subject, *Wolves* resurrects stale clichés, bludgeoning its readers with repetitive reminders that "the buddy film," particularly one as obvious as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, has homosexual overtones.

Both the nature and the effects of "masculinity in the American film" deserve thoughtful consideration. But even Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape*, a study of the treatment of *women* in the movies, discusses the male screen image far more perceptively that does *Big Bad Wolves*. Indeed, compared to Haskell's genuine intelligence, wit, and insight, Mellen's banal superficiality and her humorlessly authoritative tone can give only the illusion of knowledge or understanding.

David F. Coursen

David Coursen is a freelance writer based in Eugene, Oregon. He has been published in Movietone News *and* Film Quarterly, *among others.*

Murder on the Yellow Brick Road, by Stuart Kaminsky. St. Martin's Press. 1978. $7.95 hardcover. (In Canada: MacMillan, $9.95).

Herman Melville, move over. "Call me Ishmael," that's a grabby way to start a novel, but it pales next to "Someone had murdered a Munchkin," the opener to *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road*. Stuart Kaminsky, who types out film books in shorter time than it takes to watch the Apu trilogy (sample works: critical studies of Don Siegel and John Huston and Clint Eastwood and Ingmar Bergman, plus *American Film Genres*), has pushed his prolificacy into the detective novel field. And he's got a swell private eye for film fans, Toby Peters, a 44-year-old ex-security cop on the Warners lot, whose beat is the Studio System, Hollywood 1940.

I missed out on *Bullet for a Star*, the first Toby Peters venture, in which the feisty little shamus took off after someone trying to do in Errol Flynn, but that case must have done nothing for Peters' pockets. He's so down-and-out he makes the Continental Op look like he lives in Xanadu. The most delicious parts of *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road* are the descriptions of Toby Peter's nickel-and-dime life style. He feasts on sandwiches swimming in mayonnaise,

tacos and Pepsis, drive-in restaurant jumbo shrimp (three for a quarter), breakfasts of sugar cereals and quick dinners at the Pig 'n' Whistle.

His house? "To people passing by, the place looked like a motor court that had lost its license and sign." His office? Shared with a dentist pal in the Farraday Building in downtown, unfashionable, skyscraper LA. "The Farraday had the eternal smell of Lysol to cover up the essence of derelect in the cracked tile hall." Relaxation? "I ran the water in my bath full blast. Full blast meant it would be about three-quarters full in half an hour."

Let's not forget the dead Munchkin. "He might have looked kind of cute in a tinseltown way if it hadn't been for the knife sticking out of his chest." Toby Peters heads off on the trail, a path through the MGM office of Louis B. Mayer and over to the Brown Derby for a chat with *Oz* auteur Victor Fleming, embroiled in deep conversation with a fancy shrink about the Freudian implications of a planned *Jekyll and Hyde* remake with Spencer Tracy. (The shrink's psychoanalytic readings of *The Wizard of Oz* induce smirks from Fleming and Peters, both prime anti-eggheads. "Fleming said if we weren't careful, colleges would start teaching courses about the 'meaning' of movies".)

The least succesful parts of Kaminsky's book are the bland meetings with Judy Garland and Clark Gable, neither of whom leap off the page. A tiny vignette about another star beats all the Garland-Gable scenes: "On the way we passed Walter Pidgeon talking to a short, chunky woman in big glasses. Pidgeon was laughing heartily and saying, 'That's priceless.'" On the other hand, a surprising guest appearance of Raymond Chandler Himself, as brooding and melancholy as Hamlet hustling on Sunset Strip, is a satiric delight. This is matched by Kaminsky's affectionate parodies of elongated Phillip Marlowe blackouts via Dick Powell in *Murder My Sweet,* but told in Fleischer Brothers' movie terms: "Koko and I jumped into a bottle of ink and pulled the top over us," says Toby Peters, moving toward unconsciousness. "We swam in cool darkness, safe and protected."

I know from my own frustrated pages of various and sundry unfinished (actually barely started) "first" detective novels: writing a hardboiled work in the 1970s is an arduous task. It's a kind of burlesque, a self-conscious tour de force, and sooner or later energy gives out, cleverness gets too cute, and you are faced with the realization that you are one more lightweight pretender with a bagful of cheap metaphors and an ersatz detective who is a plastic, fraudulent, tenth tinsel copy of Sam Spade or Phillip Marlowe. Who needs your detective or your book?

Saying that, let me reiterate that Stuart Kaminsky does all right with *Murder on the Yellow Brick Road.* It has its own integrity and Toby Peters stands alone. He's going to help the dizzy Marx Brothers in the next Kaminsky mystery (boldly announced on the last page of the text), and I'll be there reading it, as lost as Dr. Watson or Zeppo.

Gerald Peary

Nostalgia Isn't What It Used to Be by Simone Signoret. Harper & Row 1978. $12.95. (In Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, $14.95.)

I felt so nearly *obligated* to like Simone Signoret's *Nostalgia Isn't What It Used to Be* that I half expected to be asked to sign it at the end as an expression of solidarity—not only with the author's political beliefs, but with her very life itself.

And, judging from those beliefs and the events they led to in her life, I'd be hard pressed to find a reason not to sign, for *Nostalgia* provides a very thick family album of the French Left these past forty years or so and Signoret's indefatigable involvement with it. Not a militant (she acts "only when the heart is stirred") or a member of the French Communist Party (Communist papers always refer to her and husband Yves Montand as friends rather than comrades), she nevertheless seems to manage to be in all the right places at all the right times, professionally and personally.

During the war she sipped ersatz coffee

Gerald Peary, a coeditor of Women and the Cinema *and* The Classic American Novel and the Movies, *is film critic for* The Real Paper.

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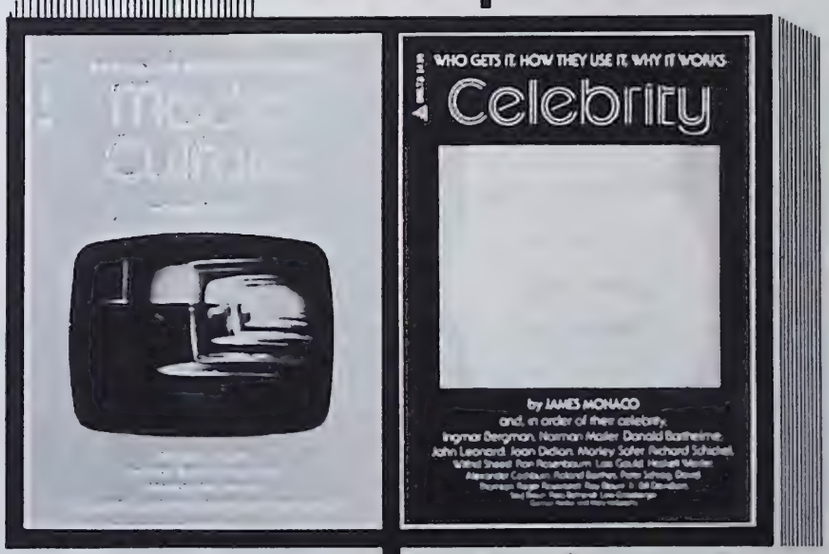

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and saccharine at the Café Flore. Her first husband, Yves Allegret, had been Trotsky's assistant. In 1950 she and Montand signed the Stockholm Petition against the atom bomb, an act that even today gives them problems when they visit the US. She and Montand went to East Berlin in 1956 to make a film of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (Sartre did the screenplay).

Later in the same year—just after Russian tanks entered Budapest—the two of them journeyed to Moscow where Montand was to sing. They debated long on going. In the end, events decided for them. Montand, signed to work on what was to have been Max Ophuls' last film, *Modigliani,* heard from the producer that there would be no film if Montand went to Moscow. Montand went. He and Signoret ended up having an after-concert supper with Krushchev, Molotov, Mikoyan, Bulganin and Malenkov.

We get the occasional personal touch—a noble wife pose over Montand's dalliance with Marilyn Monroe, and a sharp settling of scores with Lillian Hellman, Louis Aragon, Jack Warner ("...vulgar and funny and proud of his role during the time of McCarthy. He bore no grudge against those he had wronged.")

What we don't get much of in this long and badly edited memoir is Signoret herself as either actor or individual. On the first count, she says she's superstitious about discussing her craft, afraid of diluting the mystery by explaining it. But it is as an actress that she's best known and yet all we discover about her roles in *Casque d'Or* or *Les Diaboliques* or *Room at the Top* or *The Seagull* is that they were all a hell of a lot of fun to make, and the cast and crew were like one big happy family.

On the second count—the public figure as individual—we get a prose style—or an

approximation of same by an uncredited translator—that ranges from the serviceable to the daunting. Signoret's words become her mask, and to tell you what sort of mask they make ... well, if she were on the Right rather than the Left, you'd find her condensed at the back of *Reader's Digest.*

The people of Warsaw are "...aggressive, charming, proud and free." The people of Sofia are "...strong, calm and gay." The people of Israel are "...grave, intelligent ... and wise," and the Newmans—Paul and Joanne—are "...funny, warm and passionate." Perhaps Signoret thought this formula would prove catching with reviewers: "Miss Signoret is charming, witty and wise."

Judging from what she's been through, the parts she's played, the causes she's forwarded whatever the professional or personal risks, she's selling herself as well as us short in *Nostalgia.*

Will Aitken

Will Aitken is Take One*'s Assistant Editor.*

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Directors, Filmmakers and Cinéastes

A well researched and sensitive biography, *Charlie Chaplin* by John McCabe meshes the comedian's private life with his cinematic achievements. (Doubleday $10.00) (In Canada $11.95).

Dealing with the film theoretician often called the father of the French New Wave, Dudley Andrew's biographical study, *André Bazin,* documents Bazin's influence on a group of innovative filmmakers—Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer. (Oxford U. Press $11.95).

Robin Wood's classical work, *Hitchcock's Films,* now in a revised and updated edition, is a sharply analytical survey of the director's work. (Barnes $12.00) (In Canada: Burns and MacEachern $15.50).

A judicious selection of critical views edited by Peter Bondarella, *Federico Fellini* assembles opinions and essays about Fellini's films as well as interviews with and statements by the director himself. (Oxford U. Press $4.95).

Stuart M. Kaminsky, in *John Huston, Master of Magic,* takes a well informed if somewhat uncritical view of the director's uneven accomplishments, ascribing Huston's mercurial personality to an insecure youth, conflicts with his actor-father Walter Huston, and the traumas of five unsuccessful marriages (Houghton Mifflin $10.95) (In Canada: Thomas Allen & Son $14.95).

In *Miklos Jancso,* French critic Yvette Biro deals with the celebrated Hungarian director. More than a biography, the book offers an in-depth analysis of Jancso's working methods, his concept of film, and his lyrical depiction of his native land (Albatros, Paris, FF30.00).

Woody Allen is a lively biography by Lee Guthrie that captures Allen's self-deprecating humour, his kooky lifestyle and his Freudian hangups (Drake $9.95) (In Canada: General Publishing $12.50).

Nine directors who made significant contributions to the progress of cinema are evaluated in *Close Up: The Hollywood Director,* edited by John Tuska. The careers of Frank Capra, Billy Wilder, Henry King, William Wyler, Douglas Sirk, William Wellman, John Huston, Alfred Hitchcock, and the little known Spencer Gordon Bennet are perceptively reviewed. (Scarecrow $17.50).

Art and Craft of the Film

Back in 1929, forecasts of the future of film, then on the threshold of sound, were voiced by 15 eminent members of the Academy in the course of lectures delivered at the University of Southern California and now reprinted in *Introduction to the Photoplay,* edited by John C. Tibbetts. Irving Thalberg, William C. De Mille, Conrad Nagel, William Cameron Menzies offer opinions that reveal authoritative and occasionally prophetic observations. (National Film Society, 7800 Cònser Place, Shawnee-Mission, KS 60204; $13.95).

"What is cinema?" is a question that French critic Barthélémy Amengual answers with a subtle probing of cinema's underlying problems that involve its relationship with other cultural modes and communications media. His book, *Le cinéma,* is both a historic panorama and a philosophical treatise exploring the ways film develops its particular characteristics (Seghers, Paris, FF20.00).

Hollywood self-portraits on film, *Singin' in the Rain* and others, are well-documented and evaluated by Richard Meyers in *Movies on Movies.* (Drake $5.95) (In Canada: General Publishing $7.50).

Assorted beasts, fiends and creatures are attractively presented and fearlessly faced by Donald F. Glut in *Classic Movie Monsters,* a detailed repertory of their appearances in a broad range of films and other media (Scarecrow $15.00).

A perennial series of British comedies (*Carry On Doctor, Carry On Sergeant*), is evoked in *The Carry-On Book* by Kenneth Eastaugh, preserving in text and pictures the bawdy humour, double-entendre jokes and uninhibited slapstick of these popular pictures (David & Charles $11.95) (In Canada: Douglas, David & Charles $12.95).

Herman Buchman's *Film and Television Makeup* is a definitive work by a top New York expert. A large format volume with over 500 b / w and 139 color plates, it offers a comprehensive guide to makeup techniques, tools and materials (Watson-Guptill $15.95) (In Canada: General Publishing $19.95).

An extensive guide to US and UK costume designers is provided by Elizabeth Leese in *Costume Design in the Movies.* It lists and cross-references the films to which leading couturiers contributed, displays an alluring pageant of exciting clothes artfully photographed in color and b / w, and includes an essay on the history of costume on the screen (Ungar $17.50 / 9.95) (In Canada: Book Center $21.00).

Playboy's *Sex in Cinema,* now in its 7th year of publication, surveys last year's crop of "adult" movies and their attractive performers, male as well as female. Critic Arthur Knight's commentary is as revealing as the numerous stills, both color and b / w. (Playboy $2.50) (In Canada: Paperjacks).

In *Scriptwriting for Animation,* Stan Howard discusses expertly the methods and content of the genre in a convincing

argument that the true basis of an animated film is the idea that motivates it (Hastings House $7.95) (In Canada: Copp Clark, $7.50). The technical aspects of the animator's craft are described for non-professionals in Zoran Perisic's *The Focal-guide to Shooting Animation*, a thorough-going, properly simplified, text covering equipment and its uses (Hastings House $6.95) (In Canada: Copp Clark $7.25).

Charlotte Chandler, a longtime friend of Groucho Marx, collects in a delightful and highly readable book, *Hello, I Must Be Going*, her personal memories and those of the late comedian's cronies (Doubleday $10.95) (In Canada $12.95).

George L. George

BOOKS ON FILM: A CHECKLIST

The Academy Awards: A Pictorial History. By Paul Michael. Crown 1978. 406 pp. $14.95 (H). (General Publishing, $19.50). The 50th anniversary edition.

Access—Film and Video Equipment: A Directory. Nancy Legge, ed. American Film Institute 1978. 119 pp. $2.00 (P). A listing of available facilities in 21 U.S. states.

The Adventures of Mickey Mouse. By Walt Disney. McKay 1978. Unpaged. $7.95 (H). (Nelson, Foster & Scott, $9.95). Reprint of the 1930s edition.

Woody Allen: A Biography. By Lee Guthrie.Drake 1978. 183 pp. $9.95 (H). (General Publishing, $12.50).

American Silent Film. By William K. Everson. Oxford U. Press 1978. 387 pp. $17.50 (H). ($20.95).

André Bazin. By Dudley Andrew. Oxford U. Press 1978. 253 pp. $11.95 (H). A biography of the French critic and an appreciation of his work.

Bogey's Baby. By Howard Greenberger. St. Martin's 1978. 216 pp. $8.95 (H). (Saunder's of Toronto, $13.25). Lauren Bacall's biography.

The Brooke Book. By Brooke Shields. Simon & Shuster 1978. Unpaged $3.95 (P). (General Publishing, $4.95). Musings by the child star.

Caligari's Cabinet and Other Grand Illusions. By Léon Barsacq. Plume/NAL 1978. 264 pp. $5.95 (P). (NAL $5.95). A history of film design by reputed French set designer.

The Carry-On Book. By Kenneth Eastaugh. David & Charles 1978. 160 pp. $11.95 (H). (Douglas, David & Charles, $12.95). A survey of films in the British "Carry-On" series.

Celebrity. By James Monaco. Delta 1978. 258 pp. $4.95 (P). (Beaverbooks, $5.70). Who gets it, how they use it, why it works in the media.

The Celluloid Empire. By Robert N. Stanley. Hastings House 1978. 328 pp. $15.75 (H). $7.95 (P). (Copp Clark, $9.50 (H)). A history of the American film industry.

Charlie Chaplin. By John McCabe. Doubleday 1978. 297 pp. $10.00 (H). ($11.95).

Chaplin: Genesis of a Clown. By Raoul Sobel and David Francis. Horizon Press 1978. 253 pp. $12.95 (H). $5.95 (P). (Burns & MacEachern Ltd., $4.95 (P)). Chaplin as a product of his environment.

Cineliteracy. By Charles Eidsvik. Random House 1978. 303 pp. $7.95 (P). ($8.75). A study of the language of film.

The Cinema of Ernst Lubitsch. By Leland A. Poague. Barnes 1978. 183 pp. $12.00 (H). (Burns & MacEachern, $15.50).

Montgomery Clift. By Patricia Bosworth. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1978. 438 pp. $12.95 (H). (Longman, $16.95). A biography.

Costume Design in the Movies. By Elizabeth Leese. Ungar 1978. 168 pp. $17.50 (H). $9.95 (P). (Book Center, $21.00 (H)).

Deerstalker! By Ron Haydock. Scarecrow Press 1978. 326 pp. $12.50 (H). Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson on the screen.

A Doonesbury Special. By Garry Trudeau. Sheed Andrews & McMeel 1978. 128 pp. $5.95 (P). (Gage, $7.75 (P). $16.75 (H)). A look at the Hubleys' Oscar-nominated cartoon, by its director.

Dracula Made Easy. By Jeanne Youngson. Carlton Press 1978. 32 pp. $4.00 (H). Jejune musings and sketchy filmography.

Clint Eastwood: All-American Anti-Hero. By David Downing and Gary Herman. Quick Fox 1978. 144 pp. $4.95 (P). (Gage, $6.50).

Elvis In His Own Words. Mick Farren and Pearce Marchbank, eds. Quick Fox 1978. 128 pp. $4.95 (P). (Gage, $6.50). Presley speaks out on various subjects.

The Elvis Presley Trivia Quiz Book. By Helen Rosenbaum. NAL/Signet 1978. 154 pp. $1.50 (P). (NAL, $1.50). Just as the title says.

Farrah and Lee. By Connie Berman. Ace 1977. 151 pp. $1.25 (P). (Grosset & Dunlap, $1.25). The life and career of The Six Million Dollar Man and one of Charlie's Angels.

Faulkner's "Intruder in the Dust." By Regina K. Fadiman. U. of Tennessee Press 1978. 329 pp. $13.50 (H). The screenplay and a critical analysis.

Federico Fellini. Peter Bondanella, ed. Oxford U. Press 1978. 314 pp. $4.95 (P). ($14.50 (H), $5.95 (P)). A collection of critical essays.

Federico Fellini. By Barbara Anne Price and Theodore Price. Scarecrow Press 1978. 290 pp. $11.00 (H).

Film Biographies. By Stan Brakhage. Turtle Island (2845 Buena Vista Way, Berkeley, CA, 94708) 1978. 295 pp. $15.00 (H), $7.95 (P). Appraisals of film pioneers by the independent filmmaker.

The Focal Guide to Shooting Animation. By Zoran Perisic. Hastings House 1978. 224 pp. $6.95 (P). (Copp Clark, $7.25).

Getting Started in Film-Making. By Lillian Schiff. Sterling 1978. 96 pp. $5.95 (H). (Saunders of Toronto, $7.75). For teenagers.

The Great Fear. By David Cautie. Simon & Shuster 1978. 697 pp. $14.95 (H). (Musson, $19.50). The story of the anti-Communist witch-hunt, incl. chapter on Hollywood.

Great Film Directors. Leo Braudy and Morris Dickstein, eds. Oxford U. Press 1978. 778 pp. $7.50 (P). ($8.95). A critical anthology.

The Great Movie Comedians. By Leonard Maltin. Crown 1978. 238 pp. $12.95 (H). (General Publishing, $16.75). From Charlie Chaplin to Woody Allen.

John Grierson: Film Master. By James Beveridge. Macmillan 1978. 361 pp. $17.95 (H). (Collier Macmillan, $21.95). Life story of the celebrated documentary filmmaker and founder of Canada's National Film Board.

Guide to College Courses in Film and Television. Dennis R. Bohnenkamp and Sam L. Grogg, Jr., eds. American Film Institute 1977. 400 pp. $9.75 (P). A detailed listing of graduate and undergraduate courses in over 1,000 U.S. institutions and a summary of schools abroad.

Guts and Glory: Great American War Movies. By Lawrence H. Suid. Addison-Wesley 1978. 357 pp. $12.95 (H), $6.95 (P). ($15.95 (H), $8.50 (P)).

Hello, I Must Be Going: Groucho and His Friends. By Charlotte Chandler. Doubleday 1978. 568 pp. $10.95 (H). (Doubleday, $12.95).

High Anxiety. By Mel Brooks et al: novelized by Robert H. Pilpel. Grosset & Dunlap 1978. 152 pp. $6.95 (P). The film's script in novelized form.

A History of Motion Picture Color Technology. By Roderick T. Ryan. (Focal Press) Hastings House dist. 1978. 278 pp. $49.95 (H). (Copp Clark, $46.50).

Hitchcock's Films. By Robin Wood. Barnes 1978. 174 pp. $12.00 (Burns & MacEachern, $15.50). Third edition, revised and enlarged, of classical text.

An Introduction to American Movies. By Steven C. Earley. Mentor 1978. 337 pp. $2.25 (P). (NAL, $2.25).

Introduction to the Photoplay. John C. Tibbetts, ed. National Film Society. (Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66204) 1977. 383 pp. $13.95 (H). A reprint of contemporary essays on the 1929 transition to sound film.

John Huston, Maker of Magic. By Stuart Kaminsky. Houghton Mifflin 1978. 237 pp. $10.95 (H). (Thomas Allen & Son, $14.75).

Los Angeles: Biography of a City. By John and LaRee Caughey. U. of California Press 1978. 509 pp. $14.95 (H), $6.95 (P). References to movie colony.

Love, Laughter and Tears: My Hollywood Story. By Adela Rogers St. Johns. Doubleday 1978. 342 pp. $10.00 (H). (Doubleday, $11.95). Memoirs of the Hollywood columnist.

The Magic World of Orson Welles. By James Naremore. Oxford U Press 1977. 339 pp. $15.95 (H). ($19.25).

The Martial Arts Films. By Marilyn D. Mintz. Barnes 1978. 243 pp. $9.95 (H). (Burns & MacEachern, $12.95).

Movies As Social Criticism. By Ian C. Jarvie. Scarecrow Press 1978. 225 pp. $10.00 (H).

Paramount Collection Inventory. Samuel A. Gill, ed. Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences 1978. 354 pp. 2 vol. $22.50 (P). An inventory of Paramount's collection of script materials, stills and pressbooks 1912-1970.

The Phantom of the Open Hearth. By Jean Shepherd. Doubleday 1978. 222 pp. $4.95 (P). (Doubleday, $5.95). Screenplay of the TV film.

Professional Writer's Teleplay/Screenplay Format. By Jerome Coopersmith. WGA East (22 W. 48 St., NYC 10036) 1978. 25 pp. $2.50 (P). How to present a professional-looking script.

The Real World of the Surrealists. By Malcolm Haslam. Rizzoli 1978. 272 pp. $35.00 (H). With references to surrealist films.

Reel Facts. By Cobbett Steinberg. Vintage/Random House 1978. 496 pp. $3.95 (P). A compilation of data on the film industry.

The Saturday Evening Post Movie Book. By various authors. Curtis Publishers 1978. 152 pp. $9.95 (H). Stories about the movies published between 1902 and 1974 in the defunct magazine.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's Screenplay for Erich Maria Remarque's "Three Comrades." By F. Scott Fitzgerald. So. Illinois U Press 1978. 290 pp. $10.00 (H), $3.95 (P).

Script Models. By Robert Lee and Robert Misiorowski. Hastings House 1978. 96 pp. $8.95 (H), $4.50 (P). (Copp Clark, $5.50). Formats for scripts submitted for production by the media.

Sex in Cinema No. 7. By Arthur Knight. Playboy Press 1977. 142 pp. $2.50 (P). (Paperjacks Ltd., $2.50). An illustrated survey of the liberated films and stars of 1976.

Shadowland. By William Arnold. McGraw-Hill 1978. 260 pp. $9.95 (H). (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $11.95). A biography of the late Frances Farmer.

The Sponsor's Guide to Filmmaking. By Leo Trachtenberg. Hopkinson & Blake 1978. 145 pp. $6.95 (P).

Star Shots. By John Engstead. Dutton 1978. 250 pp. $14.95. (Clark Irwin, $18.95). Portraits and recollections by a well-known Hollywood photographer.

Super-8 Film-making from Scratch. By Bebe Ferrell McClain. Prentice-Hall 1978. 226 pp. $11.95 (H), $7.95 (P). ($9.35 (P), $14.40 (H)).

John Travolta. By Suzanne Munshower. Ace Books 1978. 131 pp. $1.95 (P). (Grosset & Dunlap, $1.95). A biography.

Understanding Sound, Video, and Film Recording. By Michael Overman. TAB 1978. 142 pp. $8.95 (H), $5.95 (P).

The WAFL Book. By Greg Epler. Washington Area Filmmakers League (Box 6475, Washington, DC, 20009) 1978. 192 pp. $4.95 + 50¢ postage (P). A guide to film and video in the Washington, DC area.

Orson Welles. By André Bazin. Harper & Row 1978. 138 pp. $10.00 (H). (Beaverbooks, $12.95). An appraisal by the late French critic.

Where the Jobs Are: Communications. By Maynard Hicks. Exposition Press 1978. 136 pp. $7.00 (H). Includes motion pictures and television.

Woody Allen's Play It Again Sam. Richard J. Anobile, ed. Grosset & Dunlap 1978. 192 pp. $7.95 (P). A frame-by-frame recap of the film with original dialogue in captions.

INFO

Conferences & Competitions

The fourth annual *Conference on Literature and Film* will convene Jan. 25 through 27, with the theme this year being "Ideas of Order in Literature and Film." To present a paper, or attend, get in touch with Peter Ruppert, Dept. of Modern Languages, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306 (904-644-6258).

The Vancouver Women in Focus Society is organizing their inaugural *Women's Video and Film Festival* for Sept. 22 through 24. Tapes and films are solicited by the Screening Committee, Women in Focus, 6-45 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC, Canada V5T 3H7 (604-872-2250).

The 10th *Nyon International Film Festival* will be held Oct. 14 through 21 and is open to documentary films of any length. Contact the festival organizers at Case Postale 98, CH-1260 Nyon, Switzerland (tel: 022-61-6060).

The 3rd International *Craft Film Festival* has been scheduled for New York City Nov. 3 through 5, and any 16mm film dealing with any aspect of traditional or contemporary crafts is eligible for competition. For entry forms: New York State Craftsmen Inc., 27 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019 (212-586-0026).

The third *Poetry Film Festival* takes place at the San Francisco Art Institute Sept. 30 through Oct. 2. Films should be entered before Sept. 20. For application forms: Poetry Film Festival Committee, 2 Casa Way, San Francisco, CA 94123 (415-921-4470).

Unreel is a three-day Science Fiction / Fantasy film convention to be held at York University October 27 through 29—complete with retrospective film screenings, guests and workshops. For further information, write Unreel at P.O. Box 6711, Station A, Toronto, Ont.

September 9 is the entry deadline for the amateurs-only super-8 and 16mm *Brno Sixteen* (films must be less than 20 mins. long). Write: Miloslav Jelinek, Town Cultural Center of S.K. Neumann, Brno Sixteen, 656 01 Brno, Radnicka 4, Czechoslovakia.

The International *Festival of Super-8* is held Oct. 5 through 10 and is—again—open to amateurs only. Contact: Bassir Nassibi, 22 Taheri Street, Abbasabad, Tehran, Iran.

A category for student-made films has been added for this, the second annual, *Connecticut Film Festival,* to take place Nov. 17 and 18. The competition is open to any 16mm films—sound or silent—released since Jan. 1, 1974. For further information: David White, Museum of Connecticut History, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CN 06115 (203-566-3056).

Sept. 25 is the entry deadline for submissions to the *Chicago International Film Festival* (Nov. 3-24). Write Steve Hansen, 415 N. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60610.

The 6th annual *Northwest Film and Video Festival* will be held Oct. 5-8, and film and video artists (in all formats) who live in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alaska and British Columbia are invited to submit work. Contact Bill Foster, Northwest Film Study Center, Portland Art Museum, 1219 S.W. Park, Portland, OR 97205 (503-226-2811).

The Ninth Annual *Film Festival on the Exceptional Individual* (professional, independent and commercial films and videotapes portraying handicapped children and adults) takes place April 10 of next year. If you want to

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BREAD and CHOCOLATE
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NINO MANFREDI and ANNA KARINA.

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A FILM BY JEAN-CHARLES TACCHELLA
Starring: MARIE-CHRISTINE BARRAULT • VICTOR LANOUX • MARIE-FRANCE PISIER • GUY MARCHAND

"A beautifully acted, haunting movie."
—Vincent Canby, N.Y. Times

Cría!

DIRECTED by CARLOS SAURA
Starring GERALDINE CHAPLIN, ANA TORRENT

For Further Information contact:
Judy Cohn, World Northal, 1 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 223-8169

submit a film, or find out more about the sorts of films available, contact Neil Goldstein, Childrens Hospital of Los Angles, Box 54700 Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA 90054.

The entry deadline is Sept. 15 for the *Miami International Film Festival* (Nov. 10-19). Write J. Hunter Todd, P.O. Box 014861 Flagler, Miami, FL 33101.

Also of special interest to filmmakers in the 19 western states and western Canada is the *Ten Best of the West* competition (Oct. 27-29) for which Sept. 30 is the entry deadline. Films must be shorter than 30 minutes in length. Write Howard Lewis, 1661 View Way, El Cajon, CA 92020.

Rental News

Les Blank's latest film, *Always for Pleasure* (58 mins.), is now available from Flower Films, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530 (415-525-0942). The film's an intensive insider's look at Mardi Gras and the myriad musical traditions the annual celebration supports in New Orleans.

Extremely rare surviving copies of Frank Capra's original silent films for Columbia are being restored, duplicated and released for the first time in fifty years by Kit Parker Films, Carmel Valley, CA 93924 (408-659-3474). Included are *That Certain Thing, So This Is Love, Way of the Strong* and *Submarine*.

A package of 12 films by the celebrated Québécois director Jean-Pierre Lefebvre is now being distributed (in either subtitled or English-dubbed versions) by Criterion Pictures, 5800 Monkland Ave., Montreal, Canada H4A 1G1 (514-487-1400). The films include *The Old Country Where Rimbaud Died, The Last Betrothal, Those Damned Savages, Q-Bec My Love* and *Le Revolutionnaire.*

Classifieds

LARGE SELECTION of film magazines and comic book related publications. Cinefantastique, Photon, Starlog, Fantascene. Film retrospects, interviews, biographies, and film studies. Send 25 cents for illustrated catalog. Second Genesis, Dept. T, 1314 SE Harrison, Portland, OR, USA 97214.

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LETTERS

continued from page 4

does Noble know that Mark Lambert's acting is not "excellent," when he is not even *in* the film? And what of Victoria Mallory's nonexistent yet "remarkable degree of subtlety"? I fail to see how Noble can fairly judge these two performers when they are not around to perform. Their parts in the film are played, respectively, by Christopher Guard and Leslie-Anne Down.

It is the ineffectuality of people like Noble that gives critics the bad reputation they must often deal with. If you are going to write, Mr. Noble, know your subject as well as you profess to.

Scott Ross
Raleigh, N. Carolina

We welcome letters from our readers but can seldom accommodate lengths of over 500 words. The editors assume that any letter received (unless otherwise stated) is free for publication.

THE CANADA COUNCIL OFFERS TO PROFESSIONALS IN THE ARTS

arts grants "a"
(formerly Senior Arts Grants)
For artists who have made a significant contribution over a number of years and are still active in their profession.

Up to $17,000, to cover living expenses, project costs and travel costs related to a proposed program requiring 4 to 12 months to complete.

Deadlines:

October 15, 1978, for all disciplines.
April 1, 1979, for the visual arts and writing only.

arts grants "b"
(formerly Arts Grants)
For artists who have completed basic training *or* are recognized as professionals.

Up to $10,100, to cover living expenses and production costs for a program requiring 4 to 12 months to complete, plus travel allowance for the award holder only.

Deadlines:

October 15, 1978, for all disciplines, except for singers and instrumentalists in "classical" music.
December 15, 1978, for singers and instrumentalists in "classical" music.
April 1, 1979, for all disciplines except music.

Applications are also accepted at any time for:

Short Term Grants
Project Cost Grants
Travel Grants

For a brochure, Aid to Artists, write to:

Arts Awards Service,
The Canada Council,
P.O. Box 1047,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5V8
613/237-3400

PUNDITS' PAGE

Compiled by Susan Schenker

Heaven Can Wait
Directed by Warren Beatty and Buck Henry. Written by Warren Beatty and Elaine May. With Warren Beatty, Julie Christie, James Mason, Charles Grodin, Dyan Cannon and Jack Warden.

"Script and direction are very strong, providing a rich mix of visual and verbal humor that is controlled and avoids the extremes of cheap vulgarity and overly esoteric whimsy." Murf., *Variety.*

"Whatever the reason, *Heaven Can Wait* ... gives the impression of being a swinging 1978 romantic comedy struggling to free itself from the body of the 1941 film." Vincent Canby, *New York Times.*

"We don't want to be fobbed off with fantasies about reincarnation when there are such front pages of newspapers as we have to look at, any more than we want sequels to *Jaws.*" Penelope Gilliatt, *New Yorker.*

"...with Elaine May and Buck Henry sharing creative credits, the film ought to have been at least 50% funny. The percentage is more like 5, and for that most of the credit goes to Charles Grodin." Molly Haskell, *New York Magazine.*

"...the movie left me numb, without any thoughts or feelings, positive or negative." Andrew Sarris, *Village Voice.*

The Cheap Detective
Directed by Robert Moore. Screenplay by Neil Simon. With Peter Falk, Ann-Margret, Eileen Brennan, Sid Caesar, Stockard Channing, James Coco, Louise Fletcher, Madeline Kahn, Marsha Mason, Nicol Williamson.

"[Simon has] simply been infected by the twin contagions of seventies Hollywood: nostalgia and sequelitis." Richard Corliss, *New Times.*

"The very smart 92-minute running time matches the length of the original film being sent up; it also will help the turnover of laughing audiences." Murf., *Variety.*

"This mad megillah unravels toward the end, but it's good summer fun—especially watching that excellent performer Peter Falk, who sustains his Bogietude with unflagging savvy and good humour." Jack Kroll, *Newsweek.*

"Indeed, the best and most original stroke of parody is Louise Fletcher's demystification of the hitherto sacrosanct Ingrid Bergman heroine of *Casablanca* as a woman whom one character (a German officer played by Nicol Williamson) describes as 'the most beautiful, brave, and boring woman I have ever met.'" Molly Haskell, *New York Magazine.*

Grease.
Directed by Randal Kleiser. Screenplay by Bronte Woodward, adaptation by Allan Carr, based on original music by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey. With John Travolta, Olivia Newton-John, Stockard Channing, Jeff Conaway.

"In an enterprise that seems to be all mistakes, the basic one may be that Director Randal Kleiser, who is 30, doesn't seem to know what he is talking about..." Richard Schickel, *Time Magazine.*

"Slick as a ducktail hairdo. An easy winner. ...The Dolby sound is terrific. This

is another film that exhibitors might well play at higher sound levels for greater audience involvement." Murf., *Variety.*

"The movie creaks with middle-age; the addition of Travolta and Olivia is only cosmetic, and pointless, too—like giving a tube of Wildroot to a bald-headed man." Richard Corliss, *New Times.*

"...a handful of stylish numbers doesn't add up to a stylish movie. Too often, *Grease* is simply mediocre, full of broad high-school humor, flat domestic scenes and lethargic pacing." David Ansen, *Newsweek.*

National Lampoon's Animal House.
Directed by John Landis. Screenplay by Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney, Chris Miller. With John Belushi, Tim Matheson, John Vernon, Verna Bloom and Thomas Hulce.

"John Landis' direction and a cast of relative newcomers are good elements in what shapes as a promising, if not spectacular, b.o. prospect for Universal release." Murf., *Variety.*

"A lot of *Animal House* is funny, in a Carol Burnett smart-slapstick way, but it's just not *The Lampoon.* It's as if Larry Flynt had produced *The Goodbye Girl.*" Richard Corliss, *New Times Magazine.*

Jaws 2.
Directed by Jeannot Szwarc. Screenplay by Carl Gottlieb and Howard Sackler. With Roy Scheider, Murray Hamilton, Lorraine Gary.

"Without the wizardry of director Steven Spielberg and editor Verna Fields, who made the first *Jaws* such an admirable entertainment, *Jaws 2* must abandon subtlety for the hammer-head approach..." Richard Corliss, *New Times.*

"Director Jeannot Szwarc goes through all the motions of making a horror picture, but he fails to realize that audiences like a dose of suspense along with the carnage..." Frank Rich, *Time Magazine.*

"*Jaws 2* is a curious mixture... Its third, thoughtful level is the worthwhile one: it lies in the performance by Roy Scheider... an underdog with a nose for danger and with real tenacity when he is at the bottom of the heap. ...Roy Scheider is a born actor, and seems always to be contemplating the temper of things." Penelope Gilliatt, *New Yorker.*

Convoy.
Directed by Sam Peckinpah. Screenplay and story by B.W.L. Norton, based on the song by C.W. McCall. With Kris Kristofferson, Ali McGraw, Ernest Borgnine and Burt Young.

"The movie is a big, costly, phony exercise in myth-making, machismo, romance-of-the-open-road nonsense and incredible self-indulgence." Vincent Canby, *New York Times.*

"Formula Sam Peckinpah fodder for fast summer playoff." Murf., *Variety.*

"With its facetious violence—cop cars overturning, but no one getting hurt—and rhyming dialogue, *Convoy* plays like a Roadrunner cartoon with a C.B. soundtrack." Molly Haskell, *New York Magazine.*

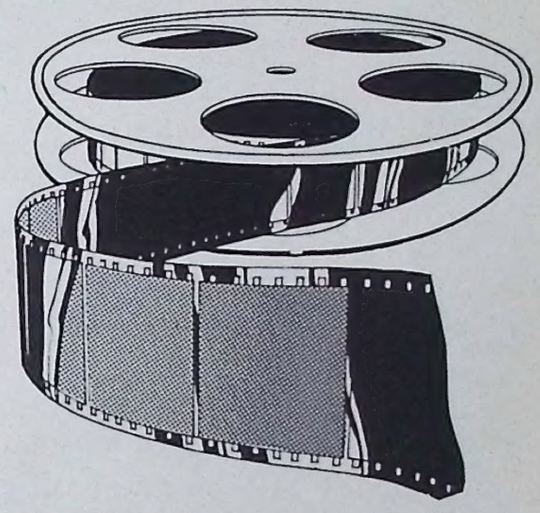
"There's no denying Peckinpah's extraordinary visual fluency, but all his trademark flourishes—the slow-motion brawls and car crashes, the outbursts of cynical laughter—have reached a stage where self-parody begins to suggest self-loathing." David Ansen, *Newsweek.*

Susan Schenker is a New York writer and freelance story analyst for major motion picture companies.

The National Endowment For The Arts

announces

Round II of The Short Film Showcase 1978/1979



Administered by the Foundation For Independent Video and Film, Inc.

Ten (10) short films will be selected for national distribution to commercial theatres

Honoraria in the amount of $2500. each will be made to ten (10) individuals whose films are selected for blow-up from 16mm. to 35mm. for national distribution.

Films must be seven (7) minutes or under; qualify for an MPAA rating of "G" or "PG".

Films already in theatrical distribution will not be accepted.

Any US citizen or permanent resident is eligible to submit ONE film for possible selection.

Deadline for delivery to FIVF is November 1, 1978. Showcase winners will be notified by February 1, 1979. All other films will be returned by February 28, 1979.

For applications contact:
The Short Film Showcase
Foundation for Independent Video and Film Inc. 99 Prince Street, New York, NY 10012

ANYONE ENTERING THE VIRGIN ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL THIS YEAR CAN COUNT ON ABSOLUTELY NO COMPETITION.

Of course, the Greater Miami International Film Festival is a whole other story.

The Miami Fest is what success did to the Virgin Islands Festival.

We just plain outgrew it.

After all, we went from only 250 entries ten years ago to well over 2,000 entries from 40 countries this past year.

And in the process, became America's only recognized international competitive festival and film market.

As a result, we have moved the Festival of the Americas permanently to Miami. Where we have all of Miami and Miami Beach at our disposal. With more than 20 VTR-35-16mm screening rooms. Outstanding accommodations. Fabulous facilities. And every bit as much sun and fun as you found in the Virgin Islands.

The Greater Miami International Film Festival will be held November 10 through 19. You can enter in six major categories. Feature, short, documentary, TV commercials, experimental and TV productions. All with major awards and cash prizes. There are more than 50 sub-categories, too.

The final competition will present over 100 world premiere feature films and 300 shorts and documentaries. There'll also be great director retrospects, seminars, symposia, workshops and a detailed 250 page film market catalog. Ten days of the very best in film and television.

Represented in past festivals have been such motion picture luminaries as Frank Capra, William Wyler, Otto Preminger, Dalton Trumbo, Steven Spielberg, Martin Ritt, Joshua Logan, Carl Foreman, Burt Reynolds, Busby Berkeley, Telly Savalas, John Houseman, Elliot Gould, John Frankenheimer, Paul Mazursky and James Stewart. And this year we'd like to include your name.

Certainly no other international film festival offers better business opportunities, a more congenial setting or greater personal attention.

For the complete Festival and Film Market entry kit, the exciting new 11th annual Festival of the Americas poster, and a complimentary copy of the festival program, simply mail the coupon below.

Or call us at (305) 673-5700. Telex 51 23 16.

And enter the first Greater Miami International Film Festival. If you're up to a little competition.

MIAMI FEST

J. Hunter Todd, Exec. Dir.
Greater Miami International Film Festival
P.O. Box 014861, Flagler Station
Miami, Florida 33101

I want to know all about the Greater Miami International Film Festival and Market. Send me your entry kit and poster.

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I love your logo, send me _____ Miami Fest. T-Shirts at $5. per shirt.
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THE STATE OF FLORIDA WELCOMES YOU TO THE MIAMI FEST. AND REMINDS YOU THAT THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST PLACES IN THE COUNTRY FOR SHOOTING YOUR NEXT FILM.